

MODERN EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY

**HEGEL'S
PHILOSOPHY
OF REALITY,
FREEDOM,
AND GOD**

ROBERT M. WALLACE

HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY OF REALITY, FREEDOM, AND GOD

In this book, Robert Wallace shows that the repeated pronouncements of the death of Hegel's philosophical system have been premature. Wallace brings to light unique arguments in Hegel for the reality of freedom, of God, and of knowledge – each of them understood as intimately connected to nature, but not as reducible to it – and for the irrationality of egoism. And Wallace systematically answers many of the major criticisms that have been leveled at Hegel's system, from Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, and Marx through Heidegger and Charles Taylor.

The book provides detailed interpretations of the major works of Hegel's mature system – his entire *Philosophy of Spirit*, most of his indispensable *Science of Logic*, and key parts of his *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Right*.

With the exception of Chapters 4 and 5, which will particularly interest advanced students, *Hegel's Philosophy of Reality, Freedom, and God* is written for students of philosophy at all levels. Wallace explains Hegel's terminology thoroughly, analyzes many important passages from Hegel's works in detail, and outlines alternative approaches (Plato's, Hume's, and Kant's, among others), so that the distinctiveness of Hegel's solutions becomes apparent.

Robert M. Wallace is a writer and scholar who has taught at Colgate University, University of Pennsylvania, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Goddard College. He has translated and written introductions to Hans Blumenberg's *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, *Work on Myth*, and *The Genesis of the Copernican World* and has published papers on Blumenberg and on Hegel.

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*For my father and mother,
Robert S. Wallace, Jr., and Margaret M. Wallace*

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All translations from the works listed here are my own (though they are often much indebted to previous translations). I have not always preserved all of Hegel's italics in my translations. Standard English translations, indicated in the list, are normally cited along with the original, with English pagination following German pagination, separated by a slash (/). References simply to volume followed by page number (as in "2:320") are to TWA. Where paragraph numbers are available, I cite them (§). Hegel's "Remarks" (*Anmerkungen*) are indicated by "R," and editorial "Additions" (*Zusätze*), drawn from lecture transcripts, are indicated by "A."

Citations of Hegel's *Science of Logic* begin with WL (TWA) page numbers, followed after another slash by GW page numbers, followed after another slash by the Miller translation page number. Together with the GW page number, I often also give line numbers (as in "GW 11:251, 13–18"). Unlike the page numbers, however, these line numbers are *not* those in GW itself, but those from the corresponding page in the widely used "study edition" (edited by Hans-Jürgen Gawoll) of the same text, listed under WL. Gawoll's edition gives the GW page numbers and its own line numbers. Though the reference of these line numbers, in my citations, will occasionally be *ambiguous* (because Gawoll's pagination doesn't coincide with GW's, so that sometimes a given line number in Gawoll may indicate two different passages on one page of GW), I think they will still provide a significant convenience to readers who use Gawoll's edition, while the GW page numbers are, of course, essential for completeness.

Writings of G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831)

- Diff *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*. Translated by H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf. Albany: SUNY Press, 1977.
- EG *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften III* (1817, rev. 1827, 1830), TWA vol. 10.

Hegel's Philosophy of Mind. Translated by William Wallace and A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971. In the text, I refer to this book, consistent with present-day translation practice, as Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit*.

- EL *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften I* (1817, rev. 1827, 1830), TWA vol. 8.

The Encyclopedia Logic. Translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991.

- EN *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften II* (1817, rev. 1827, 1830), TWA vol. 9.

Hegel's Philosophy of Nature. Translated by Michael J. Petry. New York: Humanities Press, 1970.

- EPW27 *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften (1827)*, GW vol. 19. Edited by W. Bonsiepen and H.-C. Lucas. Hamburg: Meiner, 1989.

- ETW *Early Theological Writings*. Translated by T. M. Knox. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971.

- FK *Faith and Knowledge*. Translated by W. Cerf and H. S. Harris. Albany: SUNY Press, 1977.

- GW *Gesammelte Werke. Kritische Ausgabe*. Hamburg: Meiner, 1968–.

- LPRel27 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. One-Volume Edition. The Lectures of 1827*. Edited by Peter C. Hodgson. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

- LPR *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Edited by Peter C. Hodgson. 3 volumes. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984–1987.
- LPWH *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*. Translated by H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- NR *Ueber die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts, seine Stellung in der praktischen Philosophie und sein Verhältnis zu den positiven Rechtswissenschaften* (1802–1803), TWA vol. 2.
- Natural Law*. Translated by T. M. Knox. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975.
- PhG *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), TWA vol. 3.
- Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- PR *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (1821), TWA vol. 7.
- Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Translated by H. B. Nisbet, edited by Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Skep “On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy, Exposition of Its Different Modifications and Comparison of the Latest Form with the Ancient One.” In *Between Kant and Hegel. Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*. Translated by George DiGiovanni and H. S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000.
- TWA *Werke in zwanzig Bänden: Theorie Werkausgabe*. Edited by E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970. Cited by volume and page number.
- VPR *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie*. Edited by K.-H. Ilting. Stuttgart: Frommann Verlag, 1974. 4 volumes; cited by volume and page number.

VPR17 *Die Philosophie des Rechts: Die Mitschriften Wannenmann (Heidelberg 1817–1818) und Homeyer (Berlin 1818–1819).* Edited by K.-H. Ilting. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta Verlag, 1983.

VPR19 *Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesung von 1819/1820.* Edited by Dieter Henrich. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983.

VPRel *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion.* Edited by Walter Jaeschke. 3 volumes. Hamburg: Meiner, 1983–1985.

Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. Edited by Peter C. Hodgson. 3 volumes. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984–1987.

WL *Wissenschaft der Logik* (1832), TWA vols. 5 and 6, and GW vols. 21, 11, and 12. Page numbers cited; see the headnote at the beginning of this list of abbreviations.

Wissenschaft der Logik. Edited by Hans-Jürgen Gawoll. 3 volumes. Hamburg: Meiner, 1990, 1994, 1999. Philosophische Bibliothek 376, 377, 385. Line numbers cited; see beginning headnote.

Hegel's Science of Logic. Translated by A. V. Miller. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1989. Page numbers cited; see beginning headnote.

WLfe *Wissenschaft der Logik. Das Sein* (1812), in GW, vol. 11.

Writings of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)

A/B *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781/1787). Edited by Raymund Schmidt. Hamburg: Meiner, 1956.

Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. Translated by Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin's, 1963. Cited by first edition (A) and second edition (B) page numbers.

G *Grundlegung der Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785), Ak. 4. Cited by Ak. page number.

Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals. Translated by H. Paton. New York: Harper, 1964.

Ak. *Kants Gesammelte Schriften.* Berlin: Ausgabe der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1910–.

KprV *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1788), Ak 5. Cited by Ak. page number.

Critique of Practical Reason. Translated by Lewis White Beck. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956.

KU *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), Ak. 5.

The Critique of Judgment. Translated by J. C. Meredith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

MS *Metaphysik der Sitten* (1797), Ak. 6. Cited by Ak. page number.

The Metaphysics of Morals. Translated by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

R *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (1793–1794), Ak. 6.

Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone. Translated by Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson. New York: Harper and Row, 1960.

Writings of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814)

SW *J. G. Fichte's Sämmtliche Werke.* Edited by J. H. Fichte. 3 vols. Berlin: Veit, 1845.

PREFACE

Modern philosophy and social thought are preoccupied with the individual, or (as philosophers often entitle her) “the subject.” We analyze and address ourselves to a person who either does or should *think for herself*, seek to satisfy *her own preferences*, seek to *be herself*, and possess *her own freedom and rights*. On the other hand, we wonder whether in this preoccupation we might be missing something of fundamental importance. Empirical scientists tell us that what we call “thinking for ourselves” is really just another causally determined process in nature; skeptics tell us that we have no reason to think that thought of this kind can give us access to reality; post-modernists tell us that the subject or the self, itself, is an illusion; defenders of “traditional values” tell us that there is nothing to deter a subject or a self that sets its authority above that of tradition from disregarding the rights and interests of others; and religious thinkers tell us that insistence on one’s own freedom and independence may prevent one from experiencing the affiliation with reality as a whole, and the resulting meaning, value, and identity, that can be found through a relationship with God. All of these critics are likely to suggest that the mere existence of an individual, as such, gives no access to any authoritative conception of value.

These critics raise important issues. It is indeed difficult to know how to relate the idea of “free” thought to nature as we normally understand it, or to defend the claim that such thought gives us access to reality; the “subject” or “self” does often seem almost vanishingly abstract; it is not clear that the challenge that rational egoism poses to ethics has yet been effectively met by ethical theory; and it does sometimes appear that people with access to religious or “spiritual” sources of nurture can flourish in ways that atheistic humanists may not flourish. The gap

between “fact” and “value” seems wide (even if philosophers now are somewhat less likely to make dogmatic assertions about it than they were in the first half of the twentieth century). In fact, it does not seem unreasonable to imagine that these apparent intellectual and practical failures of modern individualism may contribute to modern people’s frequent failures to feel “at home” in their social and natural worlds, and to the lapses into selfishness, ideological *idées fixes*, violence, and despair that are sometimes associated with these failures.

The problem is that the alternative modes of life and thought that are projected by these critiques of modern individualism – the “homes” to which they explicitly or implicitly advise us to return – all seem, in their various ways, to threaten individuals’ *freedom*, which is something that many of us are loath, and feel that we have good *reasons* for being loath, to give up or to compromise.¹

How can we address these issues, intellectually, without merely lapsing into one schematic extreme or the other, or settling for a merely formless and unprincipled “compromise”? In the history of modern thought on these subjects we find one major thinker who not only refuses to lapse into any schematic extreme position on these issues but addresses them in a uniquely constructive way. That thinker is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

To cut through the confusion that, for many educated people, surrounds Hegel’s name, and that results from the great ambition, complexity, and novelty of his undertaking, combined with the religious and political controversies in which it has, almost from the beginning, been caught up, one of the first things to realize is that the conception of rational freedom that is Hegel’s point of departure in his ethics and social philosophy and that runs through his metaphysics and philosophical theology is very closely related to that of his great predecessor, Immanuel Kant. Whatever else they may think of Kant’s philosophy, few people will question his credentials as an individualist. His “motto of enlightenment: . . . Have courage to use your *own* understanding!” and his identification of rational autonomy – “the property which will has of being a law to itself” – as the foundation of morality are usually sufficient

¹ There is a long tradition in modern thought of seeing modernity as homeless or estranged and in need of a “return” to something else. The German Romantic poet Novalis wrote that “philosophy is actually homesickness” (*Werke und Briefe*, ed. E. Kellertat [Munich: Winkler, 1962], p. 422; cited by David Adams, *Colonial Odysseys. Empire and Epic in the Modernist Novel* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003], p. 51). Adams provides a rich discussion of this theme in his chapter 2.

to establish those credentials.² Interpreters of Hegel naturally devote a lot of attention to his *criticisms* of Kant, and to the ways in which his theories of reality, God, knowledge, ethics, and society differ from Kant's; but if we compare Hegel, instead, with really different thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, Edmund Burke, or Friedrich Nietzsche, it becomes evident that rather than starting from completely different principles, Hegel relates to Kant in much the same way that Aristotle did to Plato: He is an ambitious and independent student, who wants to avoid what he sees as the errors and build on what he sees as the accomplishments of his teacher.³

Indeed, what Hegel attempts to do with Kant's fundamental ideas – and with individualism in general – is to *preserve what is true* in them, while *reformulating* them in such a way as to avoid the problems in which they otherwise become bogged down.⁴ In this way, Hegel's project is precisely to overcome the schematic dualism of individualism and its opposites, in order to get at and do systematic justice to the truth both of individualism and of the important objections that are raised against

2 Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question, 'What is Enlightenment?'" in *Kant's Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 54; *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. H. Paton (New York: Harper, 1964), p. 114 (Ak. 447). It is true that some jaundiced observers have thought that they saw in the notion of autonomy the germ of later totalitarian developments, but I am not aware of anyone who thinks she can show such developments taking place within Kant's own thinking. There are limits, of course, to Kant's grasp of the practical implications of autonomy in connection with "marginal" groups such as women, non-Europeans, and people who possess no property, but these limits do not follow from his conception of autonomy itself, nor does he make a serious effort to show that they do.

3 Hegel didn't literally study with Kant, but Kant was the single most important influence on every student of philosophy in Hegel's generation in Germany. Here are a couple of Hegel's strong endorsements of Kantian ideas: "It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the *unity* which constitutes the nature of the Concept is recognized as the original synthetic unity of apperception, as unity of the *I think*, or of self-consciousness" (WL 6:254/GW 12:17–18/584); and "Knowledge of the will first gained a firm foundation and point of departure in the philosophy of Kant, through the thought of its infinite autonomy" (PR §135R). I discuss Hegel's controversial doctrine that "the actual is the rational" in Chapters 4 and 5, and his critique of Kantian "morality" in 5.6. For an account of Hegel's theories of freedom and ethics that makes clear their close affinity to Kant's conceptions of autonomy and of morality, see Kenneth Westphal, "How 'Full' is Kant's Categorical Imperative?" *Jahrbuch für Recht und Ethik* 3 (1995): 465–509, in particular pp. 491–509. On the side of theory of knowledge, Robert Pippin's *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) focuses on the continuity between Kant's project and Hegel's.

4 Hegel has a favorite term, *aufheben* (translated as "supersede," "sublate," and so on), which has the dual meaning that I have just sketched.

it. If he succeeds in doing this, his structure of thought presents a constructive alternative to, and a model of how to improve upon, a great deal of present-day debate in the philosophy of knowledge and the will, ethics, social and political theory, and philosophy of religion, and in endeavors as various as scholarship, political debate, personal self-examination, and spiritual life.

Because of the centrality of freedom in all of the issues that I listed, what enables Hegel both to overcome the schematic dualisms into which we are inclined to fall, in connection with these issues, and to avoid mere unprincipled “compromise,” is, precisely, his theory of freedom. The underlying idea of that theory is to understand freedom as finding itself not only in what it directly proposes to pursue and in the thought process that this reflects, but also in what at first seems opposed to these: in (for example) the mechanisms of one’s own bodily existence, or the intentions and desires of other people. Freedom, Hegel argues, is being “with oneself *in* the other” (paraphrase from PR §7A) – in what initially appears to oppose, conflict with, and detract from one’s freedom. This general idea is, of course, familiar to everyone who comments on Hegel’s thoughts about freedom. However, the background of the idea – what it is based on, how it is developed, and thus *what it really means* – is not so familiar. This is because that background and development are presented mainly in Hegel’s *Logic* (I use the capitalized term “Logic” to refer both to Hegel’s *Science of Logic* and to his shorter *Encyclopedia Logic*, which present substantially the same doctrines). What he develops there is then presupposed throughout his system, including the *Philosophy of Spirit* (the third volume of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*) and the *Philosophy of Right*, in which he presents his account of human affairs, including ethics and politics. Hegel’s *Logic* is notorious both for its difficulty and for the controversiality of many of its prominent claims, and these circumstances deter many scholars from engaging with it in detail. Consequently, many discussions of Hegel’s thinking about freedom, including almost all of those published in recent decades in English, neglect its foundation in the *Logic*.⁵

⁵ The exception is Will Dudley, *Hegel, Nietzsche, and Philosophy: Thinking Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), which connects Hegel’s ethics in the *Philosophy of Right* to his analysis of the Concept, in the *Science of Logic*. Allen Wood’s *Hegel’s Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Alan Patten’s *Hegel’s Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Paul Franco’s *Hegel’s Philosophy of Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); and Frederick Neuhouser’s *Foundations of*

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel explains (1) the relationship between freedom and finitude or nature – the problem that Kant’s “two-worlds” or “two-standpoints” (“noumenal”/“phenomenal”) account of freedom left, in the eyes of many of us, essentially unsolved – and thus shows what freedom involves and why it is reasonable to regard it as real. When it is understood, Hegel’s position on this issue will be seen to be one of the major historical proposals, on a par with those of St. Thomas Aquinas, David Hume, Thomas Reid, and Kant, and having apparent advantages over each of them. It will also turn out that understanding Hegel’s account of the relationship between freedom and nature enables us to interpret (2) his position on the nature of knowledge – the reality that the free mind *achieves*, and therefore has access to – in a way that frees it of the grandiosity that’s often attributed

Hegel’s Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000) interpret and defend a good deal of what Hegel says about freedom in the *Philosophy of Right* and in parts of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Spirit*, but they neither interpret nor defend his discussions of freedom in the *Logic*. Likewise, Peter J. Steinberger, *Logic and Politics: Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), does not examine Hegel’s treatment of freedom in the *Logic*; nor does Robert Pippin’s “Hegel, Freedom, The Will,” in L. Siep, ed., *G. W. F. Hegel. Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Berlin: Akademie, 1997). Among scholars writing about the *Logic* in particular, Justus Hartnack, *An Introduction to Hegel’s Logic* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1998); Clark Butler, *Hegel’s Logic: Between Dialectic and History* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), and Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels Analytische Philosophie. Die Wissenschaft der Logik als kritische Theorie der Bedeutung* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1992) touch on freedom more often than most do, but none of them consider the relevance of the Doctrine of Being, and of “Quality,” in particular, to the topic. Bernhard Lakebrink, *Die Europäische Idee der Freiheit: I Teil, Hegels Logik und die Tradition der Selbstbestimmung* (Leyden: Brill, 1968), and Emil Angehrn, *Freiheit und System bei Hegel* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), give extended attention to the discussions of freedom in the *Logic*, including the Doctrine of Being; and Brigitte Bitsch, *Sollensbegriff und Moralitätskritik bei G. W. F. Hegel* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1977), elucidates important aspects of Hegel’s relation to Kant on this issue. But none of the writers I have mentioned in this note, including Will Dudley in the book that I mentioned initially, brings out the train of thought by which Hegel links determinate being to true infinity; nor do they show how that train of thought serves to defend Kant’s basic conception of freedom against the criticism that it leaves us without an understanding of the relation between freedom and nature; nor do they show how Hegel’s argument for the Concept and the Idea serves to defend true infinity and ethics against the challenges posed by skepticism and “rational egoism.” Nor do Dieter Henrich, in his publications on the *Logic*, or Michael Theunissen, *Sein und Schein. Die kritische Funktion der hegelschen Logik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), or John Burbidge, *On Hegel’s Logic: Fragments of a Commentary* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981), or Klaus Hartmann, *Hegels Logik* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 1999), or Christian Iber, *Subjectivität, Vernunft und ihre Kritik. Prager Vorlesungen über den Deutschen Idealismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), or Andreas Arndt and Christian Iber, eds., *Hegels Seinslogik. Interpretationen und Perspektiven* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), or any other work on the *Logic* that I have found.

to it, and shows it to be strikingly original and suggestive; and also to interpret (3) his closely related “idealism” – his doctrine that “substance” is “subject,” or that being and thought are inseparable – in a way that makes it (again) non-grandiose, non-dogmatic, and, given the problems of alternative views, quite attractive. His argument for his idealism includes, as well, his critique – which is frequently referred to, but has seldom been well understood – of the idea of a non-conceptual “given” that is essential to knowledge. (4) Hegel’s idealism connects “value” to “fact” in a way that allows the desert of modern science to bloom with meaning, precisely through the free, rational thought that is widely supposed to have deprived it of meaning. (5) In the same manner, Hegel’s philosophical theology – which generations of “Left Hegelians” have tried to transform, ignore, or interpret out of existence, and which is founded on his account of “true infinity,” in the *Science of Logic* – turns out not to threaten, but rather to presuppose, the freedom of individual humans, while showing how that freedom does connect them with something that goes beyond their finite, merely individual existences. In this way, Hegel’s theology shows how we can get beyond the apparently interminable war between theism and atheistic naturalism. (6) Hegel’s famous “dialectic,” including his doctrine of the reality of “contradiction,” turns out to be not an unmotivated departure from normal logical principles, but a way of articulating his account of the reality of freedom and God. And finally (7), through his idealism and his theology – which underlie his much-discussed argument for “mutual recognition” – Hegel demonstrates what Plato and Kant also sought to demonstrate: that practical egoism is irrational, so that a practical attitude that amounts to *love* is, in fact, the most *rational* attitude to take toward others. Thus, rather than being a baroque collection of claims that are so exotic that it’s hard to imagine taking them seriously, Hegel’s main doctrines in the *Logic* turn out to illuminate one another and to resolve fundamental issues in a way that lends credibility to all of them.⁶

6 I should note that the *Science of Logic* contains some doctrines that I have not been able to consider in detail – in particular, its analyses of “Judgment” and “Syllogism.” My neglect of these topics means that I can’t discuss the relationship between Hegel’s *Logic* and the formal logic of Frege, Russell, et al., though I do provide, in Chapter 4, a fairly detailed interpretation of Hegel’s account of “contradiction,” in which I show that it should be understood primarily as a thesis about ontology and theology rather than as a thesis about discourse or argument, as such. I have also skipped quickly past most of Hegel’s lengthy and rich discussion of mathematics, in “Quantity,” and a good deal of his discussion of “Ground,” “Existence,” and “Appearance,” in the Doctrine of Essence.

From the *Logic*, I proceed in Chapter 6 to the *Philosophy of Nature* and then to the *Philosophy of Spirit*, in which Hegel elaborates the implications of his analysis for human life – the mind, ethics, economics, politics, history, art, religion, and philosophy – where again I will show that his main doctrines articulate the content and implications of individual freedom in a way that is very helpful in getting beyond the schematic oppositions that pervade our thinking and debate about these matters.

Thus my investigation of Hegel's theory of freedom, while it doesn't attempt to clarify all of the controversial issues in Hegel's philosophical system, will clarify many of the best-known ones and will deal with most of the major texts that expound the system. I hope that by doing so it will encourage readers to take Hegel's philosophy as a whole more seriously than it has been taken, for almost a century in (at least) the English-speaking world, by anyone except a relatively small number of specialists. Where, by "taking Hegel's philosophy seriously," I mean: taking it not merely as a major historical influence on all sorts of other thinkers, but as a major candidate for truth.

As I mentioned, two main obstacles to a sympathetic reception of Hegel's thought, since the 1830s, have been the political and religious controversies in which it has been involved. The last several decades of scholarship have done a lot to remove the political misunderstandings that afflicted the *Philosophy of Right*, especially in the English-speaking world, up through the 1960s – though there is certainly room for additional productive clarification.⁷ On the religious and "metaphysical" side, despite valuable recent work, there is still a major lack of understanding. "Left Hegelians," who hope that Hegel's most important ideas are compatible with atheist or agnostic humanism, propound their

7 Good recent work on Hegel's social and political philosophy includes the books by Wood, Patten, Franco, Neuhauser, and Steinberger listed in note 4; Z. Pelczynski, ed., *The State and Civil Society: Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Stephen C. Bosworth, *Hegel's Political Philosophy: The Test Case of Constitutional Monarchy* (New York: Garland, 1991); Michael Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Robert R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Ludwig Siep, ed., *G. W. F. Hegel. Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), with detailed bibliographies; and Dudley Knowles, *Hegel and the Philosophy of Right* (London: Routledge, 2002). My own contributions to this effort include "Hegel on 'Ethical Life' and Social Criticism," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 26 (2001): 571–591, and "How Hegel Reconciles Private Freedom and Citizenship," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 7 (1999): 419–433.

ideas, while “Right Hegelians,” who see Hegel as continuing the theistic tradition, propound theirs, and a third group describes Hegel’s theology (with a notable lack of endorsement) as heretical, occultist, and/or irrationalist. And the general intellectual public can be excused for being thoroughly uncertain about what Hegel’s position, if he even has one, really is. My book doesn’t examine the full range of Hegel’s writings that are relevant to theology and religion; it barely touches on his lectures on the philosophy of religion and on his early writings about religion. But by presenting a comprehensive interpretation of the philosophical theology that Hegel presents in his *Logic* and his *Encyclopedia* – which is a philosophical theology that he essentially takes for granted, rather than developing once again, in his lectures on the philosophy of religion – the book aims to put readers in a position to understand how the controversies about Hegel’s philosophical theology, from Christian Hermann Weisse, Bruno Bauer, and Ludwig Feuerbach, in the 1830s and 1840s, down to Charles Taylor’s *Hegel* (1975) and Michael Theunissen’s *Sein und Schein* (1994), in our time, have arisen, to a large extent, from a failure to understand the subtle and powerful way in which Hegel’s philosophical theology, beginning with his conception of “true infinity,” goes beyond the traditional opposition between theism and naturalistic atheism, and between “transcendence” and “immanence.”⁸ Many discussions of Hegel’s philosophical theology are preoccupied with the question of whether it is compatible with traditional or genuine Christianity. As a member of the large group who view Christianity with great respect but not as the sole or even, necessarily, the primary representative of religious truth, I am more interested in the less commonly discussed question of what Hegel’s theology can show us about the truth-content of religious experience in general; and there, as I try to show, it is very illuminating indeed.

A result of this interest of mine, and of the fact that I simply lacked the time and space to deal with Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, is that although I have important things to say about Hegel’s relation to theism, in general, I can’t claim to have dealt comprehensively with

8 This crucial accomplishment of Hegel’s philosophical theology is not made clear even in such outstanding studies as Dieter Henrich, *Der ontologische Gottesbeweis: Sein Problem und seine Geschichte in der Neuzeit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967) (which contains a valuable chapter on Hegel); Walter Jaeschke, *Reason and Religion: The Foundations of Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); and Stephen Crites, *Dialectic and Gospel in the Development of Hegel’s Thinking* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

Hegel's relation to Christianity, in particular. That will have to wait for another occasion.

Besides clarifying Hegel's relation to theism, I also aim to show how his metaphysics and philosophical theology are intimately linked to his ethical, social, and political thinking, not in the way that his "left" critics fear (namely, by imposing an order on humans that originates in a power that is separate from and opposed to them), but rather in that they provide his argument for the crucial thesis that full freedom and individuality require ethics – that a truly free agent cannot be unconcerned about others. The tendency of commentators on Hegel's ethical thinking to avoid his controversial philosophical theology, along with his idealism and his metaphysics in general, has prevented them from appreciating much of what he has to offer with regard to this fundamental issue in ethical theory – the question of whether sheer, unethical selfishness isn't perfectly rational – which is centrally important for such predecessors of Hegel as Plato, Hobbes, Hume, Rousseau, and Kant, and is equally important for any thoughtful person who wants to understand *why* moral standards are important to her.⁹

A third major obstacle to understanding Hegel's proposals has, of course, been the great difficulty of assimilating his specialized terminology, his dense arguments, and his long books. I am grateful to all of the scholars who have preceded me in this effort and whose work I have been able to study, including – and, often, especially! – those with whom I have major disagreements. I certainly don't imagine that my interpretations are the last word on any of Hegel's arguments, and I

9 I have not found any commentator who explores Hegel's critique of "atomism," "external reflection," "diversity," "mechanism," and so forth, in his *Logic*, as his most fundamental response to the putative rationality of egoism. Allen Wood identifies Hegel's account of "recognition," in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Spirit*, as Hegel's rebuttal of rational egoism, but concludes that in fact this account "gives me no reason for respecting the rights of others if I happen to prefer freedom in the ordinary sense to self-certainty or absolute freedom in the Hegelian sense" (*Hegel's Ethical Thought* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990], p. 92). Robert R. Williams, in his account of *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), does not identify rational egoism as a challenge that Hegel's philosophy addresses. I discuss some of the history of social atomism, "rational egoism," and responses to them, in Chapter 2, and I discuss Hegel's treatment of the issue in Chapters 3–6. Paul Redding's *Hegel's Hermeneutics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996) is the only book I'm aware of that suggests that Hegel's account of "recognition," in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Spirit*, is an elaboration of ideas that first emerge (in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*) in his *Logic*. (See *Hegel's Hermeneutics*, pp. 156–165.) It will be clear from Chapters 5 and 6 that I have found this to be an extremely fruitful hypothesis.

look forward to a wider and deeper discussion of these arguments as people become aware of how richly the long effort that is needed to penetrate them can be rewarded.

To readers who are not familiar with Hegel's *Logic* or his other works, and are perhaps not familiar with some of the other philosophical classics that I refer to in the book, I would say that one doesn't have to be a scholar to appreciate and be inspired by these ideas. Their relevance is so broad that any thoughtful person should find something here that speaks to her. The unavoidable fact is that parts of the book – especially, I suspect, Chapter 4 – will be challenging for most non-specialist readers. These parts try to untangle some very difficult texts, and they do so in detail because it turns out that it's only through a detailed understanding of (some of) Hegel's texts that one gets a proper understanding even of his *overall* intentions. There are innumerable "summaries of Hegel" in circulation – of which the triad of "Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis" is only the most famous – that only distract attention from what he is really up to in particular arguments and in his system as a whole, so the only way to get a sense of what's really going on is to dive into some of those particular arguments. So with my book, as with Hegel's, I encourage you to pick and choose, skip forward and go back to the harder parts when you have the time and the energy to tussle with them. I have tried to give a sufficiently detailed account of most of the key arguments in the *Logic* (with the exceptions mentioned in note 5) to enable a motivated student to pick out, in Hegel's text, the major turning points and the reasons that Hegel gives for them. In the case of the *Philosophy of Nature*, I have dealt in detail (in Chapter 6) only with the later portions of the work; and in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, of which I present a complete precis in Chapter 6, I have provided no critical discussion of some of the major issues (for example) in Hegel's political theory. Good discussions of many of these issues are available in recent books in English. My analyses of Hegel's "Anthropology," his account of mutual recognition, his "Psychology," his critique of "Morality," and his transition to "Absolute Spirit," on the other hand, though condensed, are more thorough, in important ways, than what I have seen elsewhere, because they trace the way in which these discussions develop from the *Logic*.

Finally, a sketch of my wider hopes. It seems to me that it should be possible, in our time, for Hegel's project to be understood and to be appreciated more for what it is, and less for the stereotypes to which it is easy to assimilate isolated dicta or parts of it. (1) The destruction

of logical positivism or logical empiricism (which was the dominant program in Anglo-American philosophy in the twentieth century) by its own self-criticism; (2) the renewed interest in other philosophical and theological traditions that resulted, and the great work that has been done by historical scholarship on them; together with (3) the ongoing self-examination and self-criticism of European and American politics, culture, and religion that has occurred, spurred on by painful experience, in the same period, have made us open to learning about new ways of thinking and new ways of understanding our habitual ways of thinking. Hegel has a lot to offer to people in this situation. If I have contributed to the appreciation of what he has to offer and to the possibility of truly appropriating what he has to offer and improving on it, I will be happy.

NOTE. In order to be able to use the references to Hegel's texts that I give in the course of my discussion, readers should consult the head-note under "List of Abbreviations." This will enable them to interpret a system of reference which, though I think is effective, is definitely *not* self-explanatory.

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Our Commitment to Individualism and Our Problems with It

1.1.1 *Thinking for Oneself.* In this short chapter, I will survey the major issues that this book will address – plus some additional issues in social philosophy that Hegel analyzes in his *Philosophy of Right* but that I won't have room to discuss in this book – in order to draw attention to Hegel's commitment to modern "individualism" as an indispensable point of departure, containing truths that must not be abandoned, though they must certainly be interpreted in ways that go beyond initial schematic or (as Hegel would put it) "abstract" formulations.

We tend to think that a person's decisions about what to believe should be based on her own thinking, rather than being a result of just taking things on authority. The idea of thinking for oneself is a major ingredient in the ideal of individual freedom. However, when we attempt to think objectively about the world as a whole, including ourselves as parts of that world, we may find reasons to wonder whether the idea of thinking for oneself is compatible with what we seem to learn about ourselves as parts of the world. Representatives of empirical sciences such as biology and psychology regularly tell us that there is no such thing as freedom. Even philosophers for whom freedom is an absolutely central concern, such as Kant, despair of explaining how it could be compatible with a scientific view of reality. Nor is this skepticism or despair about freedom limited to thinkers who are preoccupied with empirical science. Thinkers in the Continental European philosophical tradition that derives from Nietzsche and Heidegger often associate freedom with the modern "problem of the subject," and almost as often suggest that the only way to solve that problem is to

abandon the notion of the “subject” (and the notion of freedom along with it).¹

1.1.2 Theoretical Thinking for Oneself. Even assuming that a person can successfully think for herself, do we have any reason to think that such thinking can give her access to reality? In his *Meditations*, Descartes made it his project to start from scratch, taking nothing on authority, and arriving (he hoped) at knowledge of God and knowledge of the physical world, but his arguments for God's existence – which are indispensable to his later arguments for his knowledge of the physical world, as well – were attacked effectively by later philosophers such as Kant. Philosophers such as David Hume, who tried to dispense with God, wound up in considerable doubt about whether they could know the physical world, either. It began to look as though a self-thinker might not ever be able to get beyond knowledge of herself to knowledge of anything else.

1.1.3 Practical Thinking for Oneself. In the realm of practical thinking, we tend to think that a person has good reason to seek to meet her own needs, satisfy her own desires, and defend her own rights. Like thinking for oneself in deciding what to believe, concerning oneself with one's own needs, desires, and rights is part of living one's own life – part of taking oneself seriously. These are the things, it seems, that one has immediate reason to seek. However, if what I have immediate reason to seek is to meet my own needs, satisfy my own desires, and defend my own rights, what reason (if any) do I have to help others to meet their needs or satisfy their desires, and what reason do I have to respect their rights? Of course, to the extent that helping others or respecting their rights increases the probability that my own needs (and so on) will be met, the case is no different from the initial one. Likewise, if I happen to *want* to help others or to respect their rights.² But what if, in a particular case, helping others or respecting their rights will not

1 An argument along these lines that has been influential in the last couple of decades is Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). Rorty claims to find similar conclusions in the writings of John Dewey and Ludwig Wittgenstein, as well as in Heidegger.

2 Thus, to act on one's own desires is not necessarily to be selfish, since some of those desires may be desires that the needs or desires of other people should be satisfied. But of course it may be the case that one does *not* desire these things; and then if one is guided only by one's own desires, the result will be selfishness.

increase the probability that my own needs (and so on) will be met – and I don’t happen to want to help them or to respect their rights? What if, in a particular case (and taking reasonable calculations of all long-term consequences, and their probabilities, into account), theft, fraud, or coercion seem likely to serve my needs and satisfy my desires better than helping others or respecting their rights will?

This is the issue of the relationship between “rational egoism” and ethics, which philosophers since Plato have tried, in various ways, to address. None of their attempts is widely agreed to be successful or even promising, though each has its advocates. In Chapter 2, I will canvass several of these attempts (Plato, Thomas Hobbes and David Gauthier, and Kant) and I will give reasons for thinking that none of them is fully successful.

1.1.4 Social Affiliation. Then there is the issue of the relation between individuality, on the one hand, and common needs and social relationships, on the other. Even assuming that theft, fraud, and coercion are (for whatever reason) out of the picture: If each person seeks, initially, to meet her own needs, and so on, it looks as though interactions between people are likely to take the form of bargaining over possible exchanges between them, in which each seeks maximum need or desire satisfaction or the maximum success of her freely chosen life-plan. Then several questions arise: (1) What about the value of welfare, which it seems may sometimes need to be purchased at the cost of some reduction in freedom (for example, of freedom of contract, or of the freedom to dispose of one’s own property as one wishes)? And (2) what about the value of participating in non-self-centered relationships such as love, family, friendship, or fellow-citizenship, as these are (one might say) “traditionally” conceived? At first glance anyway, it looks as though a society of “self-actualizing” individuals – who live their own lives, think for themselves, seek to meet their own needs, and so forth – may not be able to ensure (except by compromising their guiding ideal) that their unlucky members don’t sometimes just fall by the wayside. This is the issue that has set libertarians, who present themselves as the advocates of individual freedom, against welfarists and socialists for a century and a half now. And it also looks as though a member of such a society may not be able to participate in relationships such as love, family, friendship, and fellow citizenship, because her point of departure, in thinking about her relations with other people, will always be herself – her own life, her own needs, and so on – so that the closest she will be able to

get to other people will be negotiating about trade-offs between their self-centered concerns and her own (and about how the rights of each will be respected). The suggestion that the individual may *need or desire* to have non-self-centered relationships just underlines the issue: How can she arrive at such relationships by *negotiating* with others about how everybody's needs (and rights) – for these things among others – will be satisfied? For negotiation itself seems to involve a self-centered approach to one's life. Something like this issue has been on the minds of romantic critics of Enlightenment individualism from the first reaction against the French Revolution down to present-day “communitarianism.”³ And finally (3), will a society of self-actualizing individuals support a functioning democracy? Can we expect people who pursue their private interests in the manner of the so-called “liberty of the moderns” also to be active citizens, concerned with the public interest, in the manner of the republican tradition (the “liberty of the ancients”)?

1.1.5 Universal or Theological Affiliation. Finally, there is the related issue of the affiliation with reality as a whole, and the resulting sense of meaning, value, and identity, that a person can find in a relationship to God. Can a person avail herself of these, while at the same time being reasonably skeptical – as the ideal of thinking for oneself seems to require – about the motives and the claims of purveyors of purported divine revelation and comfort? Does the ideal of thinking for oneself (and thus preserving, at least, one's freedom), together with reasonable assumptions about knowledge, lead to the conclusion that one can't have knowledge about God – knowledge that could free one from debilitating kinds of skepticism – and that one must simply choose between debilitating skepticism, on the one hand, and blind (and, to that extent, unfree) “faith,” on the other? Would the ideal of thinking for oneself entail rejecting such a God's love, in any case, on the grounds that one should stand (like Lucifer) on “one's own two feet”? Is Sigmund Freud right in his view that religion is essentially a form of psychic infantilism, so that a true adult will have nothing to do with it?⁴

3 Early critics of the Enlightenment who had some thoughts along these lines include Johann Gottfried Herder, Edmund Burke, Novalis (Friedrich Hardenberg), Friedrich Schlegel, and Joseph de Maistre. Present-day “communitarians” who have expressed similar thoughts include Robert Bellah, Amitai Etzioni, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, and Charles Taylor.

4 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. J. Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), pp. 20, 21, 22. Freud gives a memorable brief account of the view opposed to his

1.2. Hegel Endorses Individualism – as a Point of Departure

1.2.1 *Self-Determination.* Hegel was well aware of the challenge to human freedom that seems to be presented by the empirical sciences. He was so concerned about the apparent flimsiness of Kant's defense of freedom that in an early phase of his own thinking, he sympathized with F. W. J. Schelling's complaints, against Kant, that Kant underestimated the significance of nature. However, the point of departure of Hegel's mature philosophical system, in the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, is the concept of a determinate being, the "something" (*Etwas*), which is what it is by virtue of itself rather than by virtue of its relations to other somethings: that is, the point of departure is self-determination.⁵ Hegel finds major problems with this point of departure, problems that are summed up in his concept of "negation," or being what one is by virtue of one's relations to others; and those problems propel the unfolding of his philosophical system. Some of the things that he says in the course of that unfolding, such as that "what is rational, is actual, and what is actual is rational" (EG §6), may raise questions about whether Hegel does in fact adhere to the idea of freedom as thinking for oneself, in the sense of being free to criticize the actual world. But it's clear, at least in his point of departure, that Hegel could not give self-determination a more central role than he does; so we will have to see how this thought unfolds, in his system, and what the doctrines that appear to conflict with it actually mean.

1.2.2 *Not Dogmatism.* In regard to knowledge of reality, one of Hegel's earliest publications was a discussion of the skepticism of his day – "On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy" (1802) (TWA 2:213–272/Skep) – in which he argues, not (initially) that this skepticism can be overcome, but that it doesn't go far enough! So he can't be accused of telling people merely to believe whatever the people around

own – the view according to which there is an affiliation with reality as a whole, and a resulting sense of meaning, value, and identity, that is the root experience of religion and that naturalistic atheism may or may not be able to appreciate and enjoy – in his discussion in Chapter 1 (pp. 10–21) of the "'oceanic' feeling" that was described for him by his friend, Romain Rolland.

⁵ Actually, the *Logic's* point of departure is in the concept of "being," as such. Determinate being, and the "something" that is what it is by virtue of itself (has "reality" [*Realität*] and "being-within-self" [*Insichsein*]), are specifications of what is supposed to be implicit in being, as such. Details on this are given in Chapter 3.

them believe. I will show in Chapter 3 how Hegel's own conception of knowledge and reality, in the *Logic*, is based upon and supersedes – preserves while cancelling or correcting – this intensified skepticism. Contrary, then, to the impression that one might get from Hegel's German-professorial manner, he is not a dogmatist; instead, he takes the ideal of thinking for oneself at least as seriously as any other leading modern philosopher.

1.2.3 Ethics Based on Freedom. Like Kant, Hegel approaches ethics, and the issue of egoism and self-interest, by way of the idea of the self and the idea of being oneself or governing oneself – which he usually refers to as “freedom.” He assumes that an organism that is capable of being itself or governing itself cannot “gain” anything that would compensate it for a failure to do that. The key element in being oneself or governing oneself, as Hegel analyzes it in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* (§§5 and 11–21), is stepping back from whatever inclinations, desires, or drives one may experience, and asking whether acting on them would fit into the big picture of a life that makes sense as a whole.⁶ Simply to act on one's desires, as one happens to experience them, is to be governed by something that has nothing to do with a self, as such, but derives – through non-rational, causal processes – from whatever environment and biological heritage one happens to have been born into. To be oneself, on the other hand, is to examine these “givens” from the higher point of view of a life that makes sense as a whole, and to accept or reject them on that basis. This idea of being effectively *self-governed*, rather than being governed by what is other than oneself, was what Kant formulated with his contrast between the “hypothetical imperatives” of desire-satisfaction, on the one hand, and the “categorical imperative,” on the other hand, whose authority is based not on any felt desire,

6 This idea is expressed in PR §5, in which Hegel describes “the element of pure indeterminacy or of the ‘I’'s pure reflection into itself, in which every limitation, every content, whether present immediately through nature, through needs, desires, and drives, or given and determined in some other way, is dissolved; this is the limitless infinity of *absolute abstraction* or *universality*, the pure thinking of oneself.” For a more colloquial description, see PR §11A (emphasis added): “The human being, as wholly indeterminate, *stands above* his drives and can determine and posit them as his own. The drive is part of nature, but to posit it in this ‘I’ depends upon my will, which therefore cannot appeal to the fact that the drive is grounded in nature”; and PR §14: “‘I’ is the *possibility* of determining myself to this or to something else, of *choosing* between these determinations [namely, “its various drives”] which the ‘I’ must in this respect regard as external.”

as such, but on thought, which goes beyond desire and thus makes it possible for the agent to have an effective self (whose dictates Kant identified with those of morality). Declaring that “knowledge of the will first gained a firm foundation and point of departure in the philosophy of Kant, through the thought of its infinite autonomy” (PR §135R), Hegel unambiguously endorses this Kantian conception of freedom as creating a self that can govern itself.

Here again, Hegel will have a great deal to say about the way in which this sort of “freedom” needs to be articulated, concretely. That is the subject of the entire *Philosophy of Right*, as well as of the preparatory argument presented in the *Science of Logic* and the *Philosophy of Spirit*. But by taking this conception as his point of departure, Hegel makes it clear that – as it is for modern individualism in general, and certainly in its Kantian form – thinking for and being oneself is, in his view, not something to be rejected, but something the “truth” of which must be preserved throughout the subsequent development of his philosophical system.

1.2.4 Self-Determination and Social Affiliation. Turning to the issue of the relationship between individuality, on the one hand, and common needs and social relationships, on the other: The first topics that Hegel takes up, in elaborating the concrete implications of “freedom” in the *Philosophy of Right*, are property and contract. It is clear to him that exchange, and the ownership that it presupposes, are primary features of a world in which people are free. Later he tells us that one of the major domains of ethical life, “civil society,” is intended, as a system, to allow “private persons who have their own interest as their end” (PR §187) to go about their business. That is, the mature Hegel – who has not studied Adam Smith and the other political economists for nothing – is very aware of the central role, in developed societies, of bargaining and exchange, and thus of contract, and of individuals who act (in certain contexts, at least) in “self-centered” ways. Once again, that central role is far from being his last word on the subject of social life. But it is something that he endorses just as clearly as he does each of the other individualist principles that I have mentioned. So Hegel is going to have to show us how the apparently non-“individualist” social institutions that he will also endorse – in particular, the family, public welfare-promoting institutions, and the state – are consistent with the germ of truth in this idea of the “self-centered,” contracting individual: how love, family,

friendship, welfare, fellow citizenship, and indeed active citizenship itself (the "liberty of the ancients") can be reconciled with modern individualism.⁷

1.2.5 Self-Determination and Universal Affiliation. Finally, regarding the question of the affiliation with reality as a whole, and the resulting sense of meaning, value, and identity, that a person may be able to find in a relationship to God: Hegel's discussion of God, and God's relation to the world, is identical with his discussion of freedom. This has led more than one commentator to suppose that for Hegel, only God is free, and we finite human beings are only "vehicles" for this freedom that actually belongs to God, and not to us. However, as I said earlier (1.2.1), Hegel begins his system not with God, but with self-determination. God (as "Absolute Spirit") is the system's final concept, not its starting point. Hegel's discussion, from its beginning, is aimed at finding out what it would be for something – initially, a finite thing – to belong to itself. He does indeed conclude that belonging to oneself (being self-determining) necessarily involves going beyond one's finite characteristics, and he calls the result of that going-beyond "infinite" and divine. But he also says that this infinite or divine thing is *not* "a power existing outside" the finite (WL 5: 160/GW 21:133,39–1/145–146); rather, it is the finite's going beyond itself. Thus, there is reason to think that he takes very seriously his starting point, in the idea of something that is self-determining: that he does not regard us merely as "vehicles" for something that is other than us, but rather as having a very intimate relationship with the infinite or the divine. He certainly doesn't assert that God simply is us, finite humans. But neither does he assert that God is something simply *other than* us ("a power existing outside"). However, exactly, it is to be understood (on which, see Chapters 3–6, and 3.22 in particular), this intimate relationship is where Hegel thinks we find the possibility of an affiliation with reality as a whole that is not the abandonment, but rather the full realization, of adult thinking-for-oneself. Since he presents this relationship and this possibility as subjects of (philosophical) *knowledge*, rather than of mere (individual) "faith," his claims go well beyond what can be found in most modern philosophers – though

7 See 6.10. I analyze some of these issues in Hegel's social philosophy in more detail in "Hegel on 'Ethical Life' and Social Criticism," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 26 (2001): 571–591, and "How Hegel Reconciles Private Freedom and Citizenship," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 7 (1999): 419–433.

not (as it happens) beyond what pre-modern philosophers, such as Plato, Aristotle, and St. Thomas Aquinas, thought that they could offer. The novelty of Hegel's claims, in this area, is simply that the route by which he arrives at them starts, as I have been saying, with a full and explicit endorsement of the modern emphasis on individuality and thinking for oneself.⁸

⁸ I don't mean this remark to imply that individuality and the individual's thinking for herself were less fundamental concerns for Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas than they are for modern philosophers. I think they were probably just as fundamental for these pre-modern thinkers (see, for example, 2.6). But modern philosophers, starting with Descartes, seem to make more of a fuss about these matters than their predecessors did; and this sometimes leads commentators on the history of philosophy to suppose that pre-modern thinkers were less concerned about them than modern ones are.

NATURALISM, PLATO, KANT, AND HEGEL ON REASON, FREEDOM, RESPONSIBILITY, ETHICS, AND GOD

In this chapter, I turn to a more detailed exposition of how Hegel, and several other major thinkers including the “naturalists” or “empiricists” – Thomas Hobbes and David Hume and their successors – and Plato and Kant, develop the idea of the individual who thinks for herself and is responsible for her actions. What does this thinking for oneself involve, in practice? Do we have reason to regard it as something that can really happen, so that it is truly appropriate to hold people responsible – to praise them or blame them – for their actions? Would the individual’s thinking for herself reduce or increase the likelihood that she would treat other individuals in a way that is in keeping with morality or ethics? And how would a person who thinks for herself relate to “God”? Should she reject the idea of God, as someone whose existence is unproven and who (if real) would interfere with her thinking for herself, or is there a conception of God that is consistent with, and even reinforces, the idea of individual freedom and thinking for oneself – and whose existence might even be provable?

2.1. Kant and Hegel on the Will

In 1.2.2, I sketched Hegel’s conception of an individual’s practical freedom, which depends on her stepping back from whatever inclinations, desires, or drives she may experience, and asking whether acting on them would fit into the big picture of a life that makes sense as a whole.¹ I

¹ This idea is expressed in PR §5, in which Hegel describes “the element of pure indeterminacy or of the ‘I’’s pure reflection into itself, in which every limitation, every content, whether present immediately through nature, through needs, desires, and drives, or given and determined in some other way, is dissolved; this is the limitless infinity of

pointed out how this point of departure seems strikingly individualistic: how it reflects the idea that one should think for oneself, rather than allowing any authority, or any external chain of causes (such as the chain of causes that produced one's desires, or the chain of causes that produced one's society, and its influence on oneself), to determine what one will do. Hegel regards the individual's freedom as the one thing that she cannot rationally consider giving up in exchange for anything else that she herself might enjoy.²

How can an individual act in a way that is not determined by her desires? She can consider whether it makes sense, all things considered, to act on the desires that she feels, or whether her life would make more sense if she formed a different desire or desires. No doubt it may take some time to cultivate, in oneself, desires that are different from the ones that one feels at the moment. But it seems that it can be done. We can cultivate new desires by putting ourselves in situations that will inspire new kinds of awareness, or by practicing behavior that, when it becomes habitual, produces corresponding new desires. If I find myself wanting to strangle my boss, I can seek out situations in which I can get to know her good qualities, and to sympathize with the difficult experiences through which she acquired her bad qualities, thus creating some desire to express that sympathy in my actions; and in general I can intentionally practice restraining myself from acting in ways that express my anger physically, thus acquiring or strengthening a habit and a desire to act in accordance with that habit (as part of my habitual

absolute abstraction or universality, the pure thinking of oneself." Note that I said in the text that an individual's practical freedom *depends on* this abstraction; it has other necessary ingredients as well, which we will come to. See note 14 to Chapter 1 for more detailed quotations.

- 2 She can consider giving up her *life* – to be able to consider giving up one's life is itself part of one's freedom (PR §5A). But to consider handing over *control* of her life to other people or to her desires or her environment is to consider abdicating her freedom, ceasing to function as a free agent while she still possesses the capacity to function in that way. In PhG §189 Hegel describes self-consciousness coming to the realization that "life is as essential to it as pure self-consciousness" – that "staking one's life" (§187) in order to win freedom is not sufficient; one must also live, in order to exercise that freedom in the world. So (we can infer) it can make sense to accept external constraints, in order to preserve one's life – but only in the interest of living free, in the long run. This is not to say that it could not be rational to accept one's own death if that might help, for example, to secure the free living of others. In any case, it is clear that "individualism" in the sense that we have been understanding it, as based on the idea of thinking for oneself, prohibits abdicating freedom as Hegel understands it, since that freedom is simply a systematic attempt to think for oneself.

"sense of myself"). Both of these intentionally acquired desires – the desire to express my new-found sympathy, and the desire to act in accordance with my habit of non-violence – will tend to counteract my desire, in certain circumstances, to strangle my boss.

A critic might suggest that in acquiring these desires I would simply be acting on a (second-order) desire to have or to act on a different (first-order) desire, so that it is not really possible for me to act in a way that is not determined by desires of some kind.³ Explaining action always in terms of desires may seem more consistent with a naturalistic view of humans, whereas explaining it, instead, as sometimes resulting from insight into what would make better sense of one's life may seem more consistent with the first-person point of view – with our personal experience of what we think of as learning, acquiring insight, and acting on it. "Naturalism" often claims to focus on where the real "oomph" in human action comes from – namely, desires, passion, and so on – and accuses Kant's and Hegel's notion that we can and should step back from desires and evaluate them from a "higher" point of view (the point of view of the Categorical Imperative, or the point of view of Hegelian "universality") of depriving action of the "oomph" that alone motivates it. David Hume wrote that "reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them," and Bernard Williams argued that genuine reasons are all "internal" to the agent for whom they are supposed to be reasons: that a person whose "subjective motivational set" contains no desire, or "disposition of evaluation, pattern of emotional reaction, personal loyalty, or commitment" that could lead him to ' ϕ ,' has no reason to ' ϕ ,' and there is no reason for him to ' ϕ .'⁴ T. M. Scanlon replies that "If I believe that I would have reason to ' ϕ ' in circumstances C" (and that this reason is not a function of any desire or disposition that I feel or possess, but rather simply of the sort of action that's *appropriate* in circumstances C), "and that Jones's situation is no different from mine

3 The importance of "second-order" desires was emphasized by Harry Frankfurt in his influential paper, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 5–20, reprinted in his *The Importance of What We Care About. Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 11–25.

4 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 415; Bernard Williams, "Internal and External Reasons," in his *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), combining pp. 101, 102, and 105 (quote).

in relevant respects, then the universality of reason judgments forces me to the conclusion that this reason counts in favor of ‘ ϕ ’-ing in his case as well” – so that I must believe that there is indeed a reason for Jones to ‘ ϕ ,’ regardless of whether he has in his “subjective motivational set” anything that could lead him to ‘ ϕ ’ in circumstances C.⁵

Here again there seems to be a gap between what is suggested by one point of view (namely, Williams’s third-person contemplation of what reasons someone other than himself “has”) and what is suggested by another point of view (namely, Scanlon’s first-person contemplation of what it means for him to make the judgment that *he himself* has reason to do something). The third-person point of view suggests that all of one’s reasons depend on one’s “subjective motivational set”; the first-person point of view suggests that they don’t.⁶ Although Williams makes it clear that he is not primarily concerned with the *explanation* of people’s actions (which presumably is primarily a third-person exercise), but rather with what it is *rational* for people to do, he doesn’t consider the question of whether one could maintain his (Williams’s) rejection of “external reasons” in regard to the fully first-person question of one’s judgments about what one has reason, *oneself*, to do.

Kant was so concerned about the apparent contrast between the point of view of explanation and the point of view of first-person decision-making that he sometimes postulated a separate “world” for each of them: the “phenomenal” world for the third-person point of

5 T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 372. Scanlon gives a detailed critique, in his Chapter 1, of the theory that the ultimate reasons for action must be desires. This theory has also been criticized in recent Anglo-American philosophy by (among others) Thomas Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), Chapter 5; Christine Korsgaard, “Skepticism About Practical Reason,” *Journal of Philosophy* 83 (1986): 5–25; Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), ch. 6; and G. F. Schueler, *Desire: Its Role in Practical Reason and the Explanation of Action* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

6 I don’t mean to suggest that this particular allocation of “first-person” and “third-person” status is the only one that could fit the disagreement in any way. The naturalist could claim to be describing her own “first-person” situation (“I have no reason to ϕ if my subjective motivational set doesn’t move me to do so”), and could accuse her critic of speaking from a “third-person” point of view insofar as the critic wants all cases to be subject to the same rule. But describing the disagreement in that way would overlook the fact that Scanlon is describing a consequence of making a judgment about what one should do, oneself, whereas Williams, in describing what is involved in judging that someone else has a reason to do something, seems not to address all of the implications of the kind of first-person judgment that Scanlon discusses.

view, in which actions are explained by inclinations, and the “noumenal” world for the first-person point of view, in which actions are decided by rational thought. Skeptics naturally wonder what the relation is between these two worlds, and how one could arrive at knowledge of the reality of either of them, from within the other one. Why should a scientist, whose normal domain of knowledge is the “phenomenal,” third-person world, view the “noumenal,” first-person world as, in any sense, real? In his more guarded moments, Kant puts his idea in terms of two “standpoints” rather than two “worlds,” but a similar problem presents itself even for this formulation. Why should the occupant of one standpoint regard the contents of the other standpoint as real? How should we understand the relation between the two “standpoints,” and can such understanding, itself, qualify as “knowledge”? Hegel’s account of the relation between freedom and nature, which I will examine in detail in the next four chapters, argues that when we think carefully about what we can and should mean by “reality,” we find that it requires a systematic combination of both points of view – the naturalistic or “finite” one and the first-person or “infinite” one – and that it will not allow us to promote one of them as more fundamental or more true than the other. (This systematic combination is first articulated, in Hegel’s *Logic*, as “negativity” and “true infinity,” which I explain in Chapter 3, and later as the “Idea” and “Spirit,” which I explain in Chapters 5 and 6.) If Hegel’s argument is a sound one, then evidently we can have *knowledge* of the systematic relationship between the two points of view, so the skepticism to which Kant’s inadequately explained dualism is vulnerable can in fact be overcome by Hegel’s revised version of Kant’s view.

In the Introduction to his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel gives a brief argument against taking human action to be, in every case and entirely, a response to desire as such. This argument isn’t intended to address the broad skeptical questions about the relation between nature and freedom, and third-person and first-person points of view, that Hegel addresses in his *Logic*, but it is a revealing argument, nevertheless. The argument is that I seem to seek a standard by which to assess my desires (PR §§ 17–18), that finding such a standard would involve systematizing my desires in some rational way (§19), “purifying” and “forming” them into a life that makes sense as a whole (§§19 and 20), and that the search for such a standard or rational system or life that makes sense as a whole is not simply an effort to satisfy as many desires as possible (a “sum total of satisfaction” [§20]); rather, it is an effort to bring something that

deserves to be called a *will*, and *freedom*, into existence (that is, it turns out that “the will has . . . *itself* as infinite form, as its content, object, and end” [§21]). For insofar as my actions are simply the results of prior causal chains, originating in my heredity and environment and operating through my desires, without any integrating agency that seeks to make coherent sense of the lot of them, it looks as though it is not really *I* who am acting; “I” am just the accidental point of intersection of these various causal chains. In such a case, there is no sense in speaking of a “will”: What is going on is simply mechanical causation. If, on the other hand, I think that I have a will, or would like to have a will, then what I have – or would like to have – is something that integrates these various causal inputs in a way in which they would not, by themselves, be integrated. That is, to have a will in the sense that Hegel has in mind – one that “has *itself* as its content, object, and end” – is precisely to have something that goes beyond what Williams calls the agent’s “subjective motivational set,” perhaps in a way that’s similar to Scanlon’s maker of first-person judgments about what she herself has reason to do.

A defender of the naturalistic project of explaining all action in terms of desire might respond to this argument of Hegel’s by suggesting that if a human being can sometimes seek to have a “standard,” so as to integrate her causal inputs in something like the way that Hegel describes in PR §§17–21, this simply reflects another, distinctive desire – a desire to have such a standard, to integrate one’s inputs in this way. The defender of naturalism would have to grant, as well – since this is an essential aspect of the phenomenon in question – that this “desire” is experienced as having an *authority* that other desires do not have, so that in cases of conflict between it and possible desires (say) to act in ways that are completely unconscious, scattered, and whimsical, it is always clear to the agent which desire she *should*, in principle, put first. A defense of the desire theory that took this line would concede everything that Hegel is concerned about, since it would grant the reality of the phenomenon that he is drawing attention to. The form of the desire theory that *conflicts* with Hegel’s view, on the other hand, is the normal one in which an agent experiences a variety of desires, no one of which has authority (though it may have sheer strength) that the others lack. In relation to that sort of theory, the phenomenon that Hegel is pointing to does seem to constitute a genuine challenge, since it purports to embody something – the *authority* of the rational system that represents selfhood, as opposed to mere scatteredness – that is not

on the same logical level as the desires that that rational system seeks to systematize.⁷

Another way to describe Hegel's challenge is to say that he is asking, Why should I regard *any* given desire as the final authority on what I should do? To the extent that I do that, I am not stepping back from my desires; I am not distinguishing myself from them. The project of having a "standard," of integrating one's desires into a coherent picture, is the project of existing as a functioning self distinct from one's particular experienced desires. Against recent desire theories of the good, Elizabeth Anderson writes:

Naturalists try to substitute for the question: do these facts *merit* this attitude? the question: do these facts *cause* this attitude? I believe that no matter how the facts are presented to a person however naturalistically constituted, *she always has room to ask whether her resulting attitudes are rational or merited or endorsable*. She has no reason to give up evaluative reasoning.⁸ [last emphasis added]

This is exactly Hegel's point. To which he adds that only insofar as one is interested in this latter question (the question of whether one's attitudes are rational or merited or endorsable) does one actualize what Hegel calls a "will," by being interested in whether one's life really does make sense as a whole (the question that constitutes the "absolute abstraction or universality" that Hegel associates with the first moment of the will [PR §5]).

For these reasons, then, Hegel's premise in his ethical writings is that we can step back from our desires (from second-order desires, if we have them, as well as from first-order desires) and ask ourselves which ones it would make the most sense to act on, and which it would make the most sense to resist. It is a premise that corresponds closely to what Kant had assumed in his writings on ethics, where he argued that we judge ourselves, morally, against the standard of a "good will" that seeks only to do what is right, regardless of what its feelings or "inclinations" may be at the time. Kant, too, traced the importance of this standard to the importance of being "free" in the sense of being

7 The eighteenth-century British philosopher and divine, Joseph Butler, distinguished between the "authority" of reasons and the "strength" of desires: *Fifteen Sermons*, ed. T. A. Roberts (London, 1970), sermon II, paragraphs 13–17.

8 Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 139.

self-governing: “What else then can freedom of will be but autonomy – that is, the property which will has of being a law to itself?”⁹ The admirable quality of the “good will,” as Kant conceives of it, is precisely that it is fully self-governing in this way: that it is not governed by mere feelings or inclinations, but by the self, itself. What is admirable is not just that (as Kant is convinced) such a will can only act *morally*; even more fundamentally, it is that such a will, by rising above her feelings and inclinations, is fully a *will*: that through it, she is fully *self*-governing. Hegel alludes to this agreement between his own approach and Kant’s when he says, in the *Philosophy of Right*, that “knowledge of the will first gained a firm foundation and point of departure in the philosophy of Kant, through the thought of its infinite autonomy” (§135R).

It’s worth mentioning, before we go on, that Hegel’s conviction that knowledge of the will first gained a firm foundation and point of departure in Kant’s philosophy, through the thought of its infinite autonomy, was not widely shared among the generation of German philosophers that came to prominence after Hegel’s death. Arthur Schopenhauer, for example, who expressed great sympathy with Kant’s dualism of phenomena and things-in-themselves, nevertheless poured scorn on Kant’s idea that autonomy (in the form of the Categorical Imperative) is the fundamental principle of ethics.¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche likewise entertained himself by making fun of Kant’s Categorical Imperative¹¹; and the twentieth century’s dominant skepticism about ethics in general did not allow a sympathetic return to Kant and Hegel, on this issue, until both existentialism and logical positivism had run their courses.¹² Before elaborating further on Kant’s and Hegel’s idea, however, I must note two forceful criticisms of Kant’s formulation of it that were registered, early on, by *Hegel himself*.

9 *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Ak. 447.

10 See Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Basis of Morality*, trans. E. J. F. Payne (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965).

11 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1885), sections 5 and 187. Beneath his mockery of Kant, Nietzsche acknowledges that Kant isn’t entirely foolish: “What is essential and inestimable in every morality is that it constitutes a long compulsion,” which actually yields a certain important kind of “freedom” (section 188, first two paragraphs). But he doesn’t explore the meaning of Kant’s claim that morality’s compulsion is *rational*, or its connection to *being oneself*.

12 For a few of the philosophers who have engaged in this sympathetic return to something like Kant’s conception of rational autonomy in recent years, see note 5.

2.2. Is this "Freedom" Actually *Slavery* (for the "Inclinations")?

In an unpublished essay written in the 1790s, entitled "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," Hegel commented on Kant's conception of freedom as rational autonomy (which Kant took to be instantiated in moral duty):

Between the Shaman of the Tungus, the European prelate who rules church and state, the Voguls, and the Puritans, on the one hand, and the man who listens to his own command of duty, on the other, the difference is not that the former make themselves slaves, while the latter is free, but that the former have their lord outside themselves, while the latter *carries his lord in himself, yet at the same time is his own slave*. For the particular – impulses, inclinations, pathological love, sensuous experience, or whatever else it is called – the universal is necessarily and always something *alien* and objective. . . . One who wished to restore man's humanity *in its entirety* could not possibly have taken a course like this.¹³

The Tungus and the Voguls are Siberian tribes. All of the examples that Hegel mentions here – with the exception of "the man who listens to his own command of duty," which is his own ironical addition – are in fact taken from Kant's *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793).¹⁴ Kant suggests there that both the Tungus and the Voguls, and the European prelate and the Puritans, are ruled by something external to themselves, which they seek to appease; and Hegel suggests, in his turn, that in Kant's conception of rational autonomy there is an opposition between reason and particular impulses, inclinations, sensuous experiences, and so forth, which renders part of the person alien to and a slave of the other part, so that – to that extent – the person "is his own slave."

Is this early critique of Kant's idea of achieving freedom by judging one's inclinations from the point of view of a "higher standard" – which is a critique that has been shared by many other readers of Kant, from Friedrich Schiller to the present – also, in effect, a critique of *Hegel's*

¹³ "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate" (written in 1798 or 1799), in *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 211–212; TWA 1:323–324 (emphasis added). The phrase, "pathological love" – meaning love as a feeling – is taken from Kant, KprV, Ak. 83: "Love to God as inclination (pathological love) is impossible. . . ."

¹⁴ R, Book IV, Part 2, section 3 (p. 164 in the T. M. Greene and H. H. Hudson translation [New York: Harper, 1960]).

own later endorsement of the search for a “standard” that reflects the self’s freedom better than its desires do? Hegel did not conclude, in his mature philosophy, that his early critique of Kant, on this point, had been mistaken. What he did conclude is that there is a way of appealing to a “higher standard” that doesn’t involve “enslaving” or rendering “alien” what is lower than that standard. He gives his formula for this revision of Kant’s conception of autonomy in PR §11:

The determinations of the difference which is posited within the will by the self-determining Concept appear within the immediate will as an immediately present content: these are the *drives, desires, and inclinations* by which the will finds itself naturally determined. This content . . . does indeed originate in the will’s rationality and is thus *rational in itself*; but expressed in so immediate a form, it does not yet have the *form of rationality*.

(PR §11; emphasis altered)

It is only when the will has “itself as infinite form as its content, object, and end” (PR §21) that it is rational (and thus free) not only “in itself” – as its content of drives, desires, and inclinations is said to be, in the block quote – but also “for itself” (PR §21). That is when the content of drives, desires, and inclinations, which “*originate in the will’s rationality*,” will receive the “*form of rationality*.” When a single “rationality” makes a transition, in this way, from “in itself” to “for itself,” the resulting “higher standard” *emerges from what it governs*, and thus is not alien to it, and doesn’t “enslave” it.

But what *is* this emergence? In what sense could the “drives, desires and inclinations . . . *originate in the will’s rationality*” (*aus der Vernünftigkeit des Willens herkommen*), and what is the meaning of the contrast between rationality “in itself” (which they are said to have) and rationality “for itself,” or the “form of rationality” (which they are said to lack)? These key questions are not answered in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, but only in his *Logic* and his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, first of all in his derivation of “true infinity” and the “Concept,” in the *Logic*, and finally in his account of how nature becomes Spirit, in the *Encyclopedia*. The essential message of all of these is that reason is not the polar opposite of the drives, the inclinations, the senses, and nature, but rather something that represents the full realization of a need or a project – the single “rationality” that Hegel refers to in our quotation from PR §11 – that is *already present* in the drives, and so on, though only “in itself,”

or implicitly, and not yet “for itself,” or explicitly. How this can be, I will explain in Chapters 3–6. My purpose in this introductory discussion is simply to let the reader know that Hegel is intensely aware – having made a big fuss about them in his youth – of the issues, about what we might call “polar opposites,” that arise in connection with a rationalism such as Kant’s, and although he does not intend to resolve those issues by eliminating either “pole” (as the naturalists, for example, eliminate the pole of the authority of reason), neither does he intend to leave the polarity in its state of “alien”-ness and unresolved antagonism. His entire philosophical system, including his famous “dialectic,” is intended to avoid the two unsatisfactory results that I have just mentioned.

2.3. Is this “Freedom” Ethically *Empty*?

Hegel’s second forceful criticism of Kant’s understanding of autonomy forms the context of his statement – to which I’ve been directing attention – of his *agreement* with Kant’s *general principle* of autonomy (that “knowledge of the will first gained a firm foundation and point of departure in the philosophy of Kant, through the thought of its infinite autonomy”):

However essential it may be to emphasize the pure and unconditional self-determination of the will as the root of duty – for knowledge of the will first gained a firm foundation and point of departure in the philosophy of Kant, through the thought of its infinite autonomy... – to cling on to a merely moral point of view without making the transition to the concept of ethics reduces this gain to an *empty formalism*, and moral science to an empty rhetoric of *duty for duty’s sake*. . . . It is impossible to make the transition to the determination of particular duties from the above determination of duty as *absence of contradiction*, as *formal correspondence with itself*, which is no different from the specification of *abstract indeterminacy*. . . . On the contrary, it is possible to justify any wrong or immoral mode of action by this means. . . . The fact that *no property* is present is in itself no more contradictory than is the non-existence of this or that individual people, family, etc., or the complete *absence of human life*. But if it is already established and presupposed that property and human life should exist and be respected, then it is a contradiction to commit theft or murder; a contradiction must be a contradiction with something, that is, with a content which is already fundamentally present as an established principle.

(PR § 135R)

Hegel here implies that Kant's test of whether a person is acting autonomously boils down to whether her will is or is not in "contradiction" with itself. Though in this simple form this is probably not an accurate account of how Kant understands the Categorical Imperative's "universal law" test,¹⁵ Hegel's passage nevertheless raises an important issue for Kant and for the concept of autonomy: Is it possible to be autonomous without concerning oneself about the autonomy of other people? That is, is it possible to be autonomous without concerning oneself about *ethics*? (Hegel's term for Kant's conception of ethics, and others that he associates with it, is "morality" [*Moralität*], whereas his term for his own conception is "ethics" [*Sittlichkeit*], but for our present purposes I am using the two words interchangeably.) Kant, as is well known, maintains that immoral autonomy is not a logical possibility; this is a major claim of his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (see Ak. 447: "a free will and a will under moral laws are one and the same") and his *Critique of Practical Reason*. Hegel evidently is questioning whether Kant has in fact shown this to be the case.¹⁶ He is implying that for all that Kant has shown, a person could be perfectly autonomous while showing no respect for "property and human life," and likewise, no doubt, for ethics in general.

So here again, Hegel thinks that Kant has left a major issue about the nature of practical individualism unresolved. Hegel doesn't conclude that Kant was wrong about the importance of autonomy, but he thinks that crucial work remains to be done in order to show that autonomy doesn't have massively anti-social implications. Before I go into more detail about this issue, I first want to address one more objection to Kant's conception of freedom as self-government, which is not an objection that *Hegel* raises but is one that is very often raised, and that certainly needs to be addressed.

15 See Marcus G. Singer, *Generalization in Ethics* (New York: Knopf, 1961), pp. 251–253; Honora Nell (O'Neill), *Acting on Principle. An Essay on Kantian Ethics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), Chapter 5, "Applying the Categorical Imperative"; Christine Korsgaard, "The Formula of Universal Law," in her *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 86 and 95. Hegel's earliest statement of the general criticism of Kant's Categorical Imperative that I've quoted from the *Philosophy of Right* was in his early (1802/1803) essay, *Natural Law*, trans. by T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975)/TWA 2:434–530, at pp. 460–463.

16 This interpretation of Hegel's "emptiness" charge is advanced, and the so-interpreted charge is defended, by Allen W. Wood in his *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 161–167.

2.4. Is this "Going Beyond . . ." Really "*Freedom*"?

Though Kant and Hegel differ, as I've been saying, about whether to interpret the relation between freedom and nature as a "polar" opposition and about how to demonstrate that freedom and ethics go together, they both believe that freedom depends upon the capacity to go beyond one's felt inclinations, desires, and so on, and to seek a higher standard to guide one's actions. An objection that is often raised against their view could be put as follows: "*Freedom* isn't a capacity for a certain kind of *thinking*; rather, freedom is simply the ability to act in a way that is not determined by anything but oneself – to act in a way that isn't caused by the world outside oneself. Surely one couldn't hold a person *responsible* for an action that was caused by the state of the world before she was born, and that, with sufficient knowledge of that state and of the laws of nature, could have been predicted before she was born." Kant himself seems to be strongly influenced by this thought when he concludes that freedom can't function in the same world, or (at least) be understood from the same standpoint, in which causation and nature function or are understood. This thought – that freedom is essentially simply the occurrence of acts of willing that are not caused by anything prior to themselves – has been argued for by a number of philosophers, including the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid and the twentieth-century philosophers, C. A. Campbell, Roderick Chisholm, and Peter Van Inwagen, who are commonly referred to as "libertarian" or "voluntarist" theorists of freedom and responsibility.¹⁷

The voluntarist position certainly has some intuitive force. Kant seems to concede its argument; Hegel, however, as I said in 2.2, goes to considerable lengths to show that we don't need to think of causation and freedom as incompatible, polar opposites. I'll lay out his argument on this subject in Chapters 3–6. Here I want to address, initially, the simple claim of voluntarism that the crucial requirement, for responsibility, is that the action was not caused by anything other than the agent. This claim raises the issue of what it is, positively, for an action to be caused *by the agent*. It is presumably not enough that the action

¹⁷ Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (Edinburgh, 1788); C. A. Campbell, *On Selfhood and Godhood* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1957), pp. 167–179; Roderick M. Chisholm, "Human Freedom and the Self," The Lindley Lecture, 1964, Department of Philosophy, University of Kansas, reprinted in Gary Watson, ed., *Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 24–35; Peter Van Inwagen, "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism," *Philosophical Studies* 27 (1975): 185–199, reprinted in Gary Watson, ed., *Free Will*, pp. 46–58.

wasn't caused by something *other than* the agent; for that would leave open the possibility that the action was purely random, not caused by anything at all. Kant's answer to this question, which Hegel agrees with, is that the action is caused by the agent if the agent is capable of being guided by a higher standard than her inclinations (by a standard that is, as Kant says, "categorical"), and if nothing prevents this guidance from being effective, in the particular case. Kant's reason for saying that this capability must be present and potentially effective is that if it is absent, or prevented from operating, *there is no point in saying that a responsible "agent" is at work* in the action. If uncaused "actions" simply *happen*, inexplicably, there is no point in holding anyone responsible for them, or in speaking of an "agent," or of "actions," at all. What is present is simply these random, inexplicable events. If there is to be a point in speaking of "responsibility," "agent," "actions," and so forth, it must be – Kant and Hegel say – because what produced the "actions" was, in fact, something that is capable of *evaluating* actions, and in that way of being *at work* and *involved in* them, rather than producing them either randomly or automatically.

At this point, I must mention a third, competing view of responsibility, in addition to the voluntarist view (according to which responsibility requires, primarily, the absence of a cause that is other than the agent herself) and the Kant/Hegel view (according to which responsibility requires the presence of something that's capable of "evaluating" actions – of being guided by a standard that's higher than her inclinations). This third view is advocated by the same "naturalists" whom I described as defending the theory that actions are to be explained solely as resulting from *desires*. Leading representatives of this position are Thomas Hobbes and David Hume, and what they say about responsibility is that there must indeed be a point in saying that an "agent" is at work, in an "action," but that, contrary to Kant and Hegel, this point involves nothing as fancy as a capacity for "going beyond" inclinations or desires, to some supposedly "higher standard"; what it requires is simply that the action was caused by characteristics of the agent, such as her generosity, her greed, or her compassion, and not by some external coercing force, such as a robber's holding a gun to her head.¹⁸ If the action

¹⁸ See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 21, paragraphs 1–4, and David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Part III, sections 1 and 2, and *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1902), pp. 80–103. An influential recent statement of substantially the

was caused by these characteristics of the agent, then the action isn't merely random or inexplicable, and it does make sense to speak of an "agent," and her "actions" – *even if* (contrary to voluntarism) these characteristics of the agent may in turn have been caused by circumstances that were outside the agent herself, such as the childhood environment that trained her in a certain way, or the evolutionary history that produced her genes. This naturalistic view is commonly referred to as "compatibilism," because it defends (against voluntarism) the compatibility of responsibility and natural causation. And it has the advantage, against the Kant/Hegel view, that it requires only a very simple conception of human beings and their practical functioning, according to which humans, like other animals, act simply in order to satisfy desires that they feel, and not in accordance with some supposedly higher standard, the source of whose authority may seem – at least to non-religious people – to be unclear. The naturalistic view seems to show how it can make sense to speak of responsibility and agents and actions, without appealing to the "higher" capacities that the Kant/Hegel view appeals to.

However, the naturalistic view also has problems. The naturalist grants that for some psychological traits, the explanation of their presence in the agent is simply outside of her. For traits of that kind – for which (according to the theory) the agent is not responsible, because her acquisition of the trait doesn't reflect other traits that she already had – one would like to know what it is that makes the agent responsible for actions that are caused by this trait? It's hard to know what the naturalist can say at this point, except that the agent simply *is* this trait (and others like it). But this doesn't seem to be consistent with experience. However greedy or compassionate I may be, and however unapologetic I may be about my greed or my compassion, it seems unlikely that I would agree that if I lost my greed or my compassion, *I myself* would no longer be present, or that my presence would be "reduced" proportionately to the weight of these traits in the basket of traits that constitutes me.

Furthermore, many of the most difficult practical issues in determining responsibility have to do with deciding whether a person who has certain psychological characteristics should, in fact, be held responsible

same position is A. J. Ayer, "Freedom and Necessity," in his *Philosophical Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1954), pp. 271–284, reprinted in Gary Watson, ed., *Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 15–23.

(and praised or blamed) for actions that result from those characteristics. For example, kleptomania and schizophrenia are psychological characteristics that give rise to actions for which the agent is often *not* thought to be fully responsible. Why is it that the agent is responsible for actions that result from her greed or compassion, but not for actions that result from her kleptomania or schizophrenia? Naturalistic compatibilism doesn't seem to offer a ready explanation for this difference.¹⁹ Kant's and Hegel's approach, on the other hand, addresses it directly. Greed and compassion are both traits that the agent might be able to do something about, by efforts of the sort that I described in 2.1 (self-training), if she evaluated them by reference to a "higher" Kantian or Hegelian standard and concluded that they failed to meet that standard – whereas kleptomania and schizophrenia don't seem to respond to this sort of treatment. That's why we say that because a person who is in the grip of schizophrenia "doesn't understand the difference between right and wrong," and because although a person who is in the grip of kleptomania may understand that difference, she is unable to bring this understanding to bear on her *actions* (which seem not to respond at all to what she thinks), neither of these people is fully to blame for whatever she does in these circumstances. The Kantian/Hegelian "higher standard" account explains the relevance of what everyday discussions of responsibility refer to as "understanding the difference between right and wrong," whereas naturalistic compatibilism, in its classical forms at least, simply doesn't come to grips with the issue.²⁰

Nor does voluntarism address this issue. Kant's and Hegel's rationalist approach ("rationalist" because it ascribes to reason the ability to go beyond desires or inclinations, in practical reasoning) is the only one of the three approaches I've mentioned that does address it. Voluntarists like to describe their theory as the only theory of "*real* freedom," because it focusses on the most abstract characterization of freedom – a

19 A. J. Ayer, in the the paper cited in note 18, mentions kleptomania as a psychological trait that produces actions for which we don't hold the agent responsible, but he doesn't explain why our attitude toward it differs from our attitude toward greed or compassion, in this way.

20 When Isaiah Berlin, following in the footsteps of Hobbes, Hume, and Bentham, advocated "'negative' freedom" – "liberty *from*; absence of interference" – as against "the 'positive' conception of freedom as self-mastery" ("Two Concepts of Liberty," in his *Four Essays on Liberty* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969], pp. 122, 127, 134), he overlooked the fact that madmen aren't free, so evidently some portion of rational self-mastery is an essential ingredient in the freedom that we value.

characterization that many people are instinctively attracted to – which describes it as the opposite of causation or “determinism.” By excluding actions caused by anything other than the agent, voluntarism seems to focus more sharply than naturalistic compatibilism does on the issue of what makes an action the agent’s “own.” But since the Kant/Hegel approach addresses the way we discriminate in practice between actions for which people are responsible and actions for which they aren’t responsible, where we might say that the latter actions happen “through” the agent, but only the former ones are really the agent’s “*own* actions,” the Kant/Hegel approach very much addresses the issue of what makes an action the agent’s “own,” and indeed it seems to address it with greater subtlety and realism than the voluntaristic approach does. When we appreciate this difference between voluntarism and the Kant/Hegel approach, we might begin to wonder whether the primary issue, in regard to responsibility, really is the question of whether there were causes outside the agent that influenced her decision, or whether, on the contrary, the primary issue is whether the agent was able to go beyond her feelings and inclinations so as to understand the difference between right and wrong, good and bad.

If we conclude that Kant and Hegel are right about what the primary issue is, here, we will certainly still need to address the issue of how or in what sense it is *possible* for a person to go beyond her feelings and inclinations if she is still subject to causal influences from the world outside her and before her birth. That is, the issue of the relation between the possible truth of natural “determinism,” on the one hand, and responsibility, on the other, will still need to be addressed, which is why both Kant and Hegel do address it, Kant by way of his dualism of the noumenal world versus the phenomenal world, and Hegel by means of his account of true infinity, the Concept, and the nature/Spirit relationship. In Hegel’s case, the same undermining of “polar opposition” by which he overcomes the “alienness” that he criticized in Kant’s dualism of reason versus the inclinations (2.3) also undermines the polar opposition of natural determinism and responsibility. (I will explain all of this in Chapter 3.) But the initial reason why Hegel is able to address the determinism/freedom issue – about which voluntarism makes such a fuss – in a *very different way* from voluntarism, is precisely because Hegel *shares with* or derives from Kant the view that the primary consideration, with regard to responsibility, is not the presence or absence of external causal influences, as such, but the agent’s possession of the capacity to go beyond her feelings and

inclinations so as to understand the difference between right and wrong, good and bad.

The advantage that the Kant/Hegel approach seems to have over both naturalistic compatibilism and voluntarism – namely, that it can explain the agent’s “ownership” (of the actions for which she is responsible) in a way that seems more subtle and realistic than either of the other approaches – explains why, despite the Kant/Hegel approach’s relative complexity and distance from some of our first thoughts about responsibility, there is nevertheless a long tradition of theories of human functioning and responsibility that resemble the Kant/Hegel approach more than they resemble either naturalistic compatibilism or voluntarism. Something like Kant’s and Hegel’s approach seems to be implied by, for example, Plato’s account of practical reasoning and the “soul,” in *Republic*, Book iv, and Aristotle’s account of practical reasoning in *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books i–iii; and something like it has also been influential in recent decades among quite a few Anglo-American philosophers who write about freedom and responsibility – though they often tend to associate their thinking more with the model of Plato than with those of Kant or Hegel, no doubt because Kant’s example is rendered confusing by his simultaneous attraction to voluntarist incompatibilism (and as for Hegel’s example, it simply isn’t understood, so hardly anyone cites it).²¹

2.5. Individualism and Ethics: Hobbes and Gauthier

I want to return now to the issue of the relationship between individualism, or individual freedom, and ethics. Does caring about one’s own freedom give one any reason to care about the freedom of other people, to respect their rights, and perhaps even to aid them when they’re in trouble? Kant and Hegel both think that the answer to this question is

21 For recent Anglo-American rationalist theorists of responsibility, see Gary Watson, “Free Agency,” *Journal of Philosophy* 72 (1975): 205–220, and Charles Taylor, “Responsibility for Self,” in A. O. Rorty, ed., *The Identities of Persons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 281–299 (both of these are reprinted in Gary Watson, ed., *Free Will* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982]); Susan Wolf, *Freedom Within Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); and John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control. A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Watson identifies Plato as the main antecedent of his theory. On the rationalism about responsibility that seems to be implied by Aristotle’s analysis of practical reasoning, see T. H. Irwin, “Reason and Responsibility in Aristotle,” in A. O. Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 117–156.

yes, and they offer importantly different arguments for that conclusion. Hegel's argument for it will occupy us in Chapters 3, 5, and 6. Before outlining and criticizing Kant's argument, I first want to survey (as I did in the previous section) two of the major alternative proposals, in regard to this issue, that have been made in the history of Western philosophy, so as to give us an idea of the "environment" of Kant's and Hegel's thinking on this issue. Familiarity with the strategy and the weaknesses of other proposed solutions can help us to appreciate the distinctive character and the strengths (as well as, perhaps, weaknesses) of Kant's and Hegel's approaches.

The first major proposal that I will consider is Thomas Hobbes's, whose basic assumptions still make up – in the form of what is now called "rational choice theory" – one of the most influential conceptions of how a rational individual would deal with other individuals. Closely related to the "naturalism" about human functioning that I discussed earlier, rational choice theory is probably the single most influential conception, in the present-day social science, of human behavior. In his *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes describes the difficult situation of humans in a "state of nature," in which there is no order imposed on all of them either by external force or by inner conscience, so that each must always be afraid that others will use force to deprive her of anything that has value. (Hobbes recognizes that some people will want to act fairly towards others, but points out that one cannot assume that this will be true of every individual one meets, so fear is always in order.) Assuming that humans fear death and want consumable goods, Hobbes argues that it will be rational for them to agree to obey a sovereign power that will impose some sort of collective order, and thus reduce their fear and protect their enjoyment of those goods. The question then arises, as to whether it will be rational, for humans who have entered the rational "covenant" to obey the sovereign power, to follow through and actually *do so* – to obey the sovereign's law even when (for example) it looks as though they might profit, personally, by disobeying it? The person who holds that covenant-breaking can be rational, Hobbes describes as a "fool," arguing that since someone who is caught breaking his covenant may lose all the benefits of membership in society – may be expelled into the wilderness, back into the "state of nature" – the possible loss is too great to be justified by any possible gain (*Leviathan*, chapter 15, §5). However, we who run similar risks of violent death every day when we cross the street (the risk of being hit by a truck) or take a shower (the risk of breaking our neck) may reasonably wonder whether it is

clearly irrational to run such risks, if the probability of the disaster is small enough and the size and probability of the gain that we have in view are large enough.

So Hobbes seems not to have shown that obeying the public authority is always the best way to secure safety and other goods for oneself. It is true, of course, that if there are *many* “fools,” who reason that they can do better for themselves by breaking their covenants when it looks as though their chances of getting away undetected and unpunished are very high, then the public authority may not serve its purpose: Everyone, the “fools” included, may be just as unsafe as they were before. If all are equally rational, and if all have only the sort of motives that Hobbes says we can count on humans to have (the desires for safety and for goods that they personally can consume), then the covenant and public order may collapse. So the success of the “fools” strategy, in individual cases, is likely to depend upon most people’s either being conscientious covenant-keepers or not being smart enough to see that Hobbes’s argument for keeping one’s covenant is not cogent. In such a situation, the “fool” will be what we nowadays call a “free rider”: one who takes advantage of other people’s support of a public institution, by enjoying its benefits without paying her share of the costs. Opportunities for this sort of free riding seem to be present often enough that the “fool’s” strategy can hardly be dismissed as, in general, an irrational one.

Thus Hobbes’s argument for obeying a public authority that one has helped to set up seems to be flawed. Recently, however, David Gauthier has shown, based on premises similar to Hobbes’s, how it could be rational to *acquire a disposition to obey* rules that one has agreed with others to set up – provided that others are also likely to obey them – rather than to take advantage of opportunities to secretly break the rules, as the “fool” advocates.²² Gauthier points out that individuals who acquire such dispositions may be able to participate in societies that are more productive (of the goods that they value) than societies that are composed of individuals who insist on making sure that their particular actions produce the most good for themselves that they could produce. For there will be less need for individuals to protect themselves against

22 “In Hobbes we find the true ancestor of the theory of morality that we shall present” (David Gauthier, *Morals by Agreement* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986], p. 10). For a sampling and overview of contemporary “rational choice theory,” of which Gauthier’s book is an instance, see Jon Elster, ed., *Rational Choice* (New York: New York University Press, 1986).

being taken advantage of in a society where people are disposed not to take advantage of one another, and the effort that would have gone into such protection can then be invested in producing other goods. And if the society, as a result, produces more of these other goods, the individual is likely to do better than she could in a less-productive society. In this way, Gauthier argues that individuals who have dispositions to obey the rules, rather than making exceptions on their own behalf, may do better, and that it can therefore be rational for them to *acquire* such dispositions. Thus he seems to have answered Hobbes's "fool."

In doing so, however, he brings out a feature of the Hobbesian approach to practical reasoning that suggests that what it justifies may not be "morality" as many of us understand that term. Gauthier intends to demonstrate the rationality of morals, as the title of his book – *Morals by Agreement* – suggests. Hobbes himself did not discuss morality as such; rather than asking whether or not we should obey certain rules, he asked whether or not we should obey a sovereign power. But Gauthier's approach is like Hobbes's in the conception of practical reasoning that it employs: It aims to show that the obedience that it considers (which in this case happens to be obedience to agreed-upon rules) can be rational in that it produces, for each of us, more of what each of us values than disobedience can produce.

In the course of spelling out the details of the bargaining process by which individuals could arrive at the rules that they will agree on, Gauthier (unlike Hobbes) considers the possibility that some participants in the process may be handicapped, in comparison with others. The types of handicaps that he mentions are ideological or psychological factors, historical factors such as the community's customs, and differences in technological knowledge that enable some individuals to employ superior firepower to coerce others (*Morals by Agreement*, pp. 230–231). Any of these handicaps can cause an individual to accept a set of rules that are unfair to herself, but the best that she can negotiate under the circumstances. In extreme cases, they can make it unnecessary for others to enter into any agreement with her at all. Gauthier mentions the case of the Spaniards who overcame the Indian civilizations of the Americas, and who saw no need to enter into any agreement with the Indians that would limit their power to exploit them. He concludes that where there are differences in technology such as those between the Spaniards and the Indians, his argument for mutual agreement is inapplicable. "In reconciling reason and morals," he writes, "we do not claim that it is never rational for one person to

take advantage of another . . . Such a claim would be false . . . Morals arise in and from the rational agreement *of equals*" (p. 232; emphasis added) – which the Spaniards and the Indians, with their differing levels of technological knowledge, were not.

This conclusion, however, must make us question in what sense it is *morality* that Gauthier's argument has "reconciled with reason." Is the fact that a set of rules is agreed upon and obeyed by a group of people, when disobedience in particular cases would sometimes benefit individuals more than the obedience that they in fact exhibit, enough to qualify those rules as "morals"? If there can be people who don't qualify for participation in such an agreement, because they lack (for example) relevant technological knowledge, then the rules contained in the agreement don't appear to match the rules that we commonly refer to as "moral," because the latter rules are generally supposed to protect the ignorant as well as the knowledgeable.

It is true that most leading moral theories have difficulty accounting for some categories of obligation that common sense morality assumes we have. For example, the Kantian theory has trouble making sense of our feeling that we should not cause unnecessary pain to non-human animals. But the kind of obligation that Gauthier's theory fails to account for, being an obligation toward what may turn out to be quite a large percentage of our fellow human beings, constitutes a particularly blatant problem. If Gauthier's argument is the best one that can be constructed on the basis of a conception of practical reasoning as aiming at maximizing the satisfaction of the individual's desires or preferences, then it looks as though the kind of morals that most people usually think they operate by cannot in fact be reconciled with that kind of practical reasoning.

2.6. An Early Critic of Hobbes and Gauthier: Plato on the Will and Justice

However, despite the current prestige of rational choice theory, it is not the only conception of practical reasoning that has been taken seriously in our philosophical tradition. There are others, and others that have been thought to relate to morality in ways quite different from the Hobbesian way. One of them was developed almost 2,000 years before Hobbes by Plato, in his *Republic*, in direct response to the weakness of the "rational choice" approach – a weakness that was exhibited by Glaucon in his famous challenge to Socrates at the beginning of *Republic*,

Book ii. Glaucon – speaking not for himself but for the sophists whom he wants Socrates to refute – first sketches a “social contract” theory of the origin of mutual restraint, in which people judge that they stand to lose more by other people’s predatory behavior, in the state of nature, than they stand to gain by their own, and so they “decide that it is profitable to come to an agreement with each other neither to do injustice nor to suffer it” (359a).²³ Glaucon goes on to say, however, in the spirit of Hobbes’s “fool,” that someone who had the power to do injustice with impunity would be “mad” not to do it. He illustrates this claim with the story of the shepherd, an ancestor of Gyges of Lydia, who found a ring that made him invisible and thus enabled him to seduce the king’s wife and make himself king. “Someone who didn’t want to do injustice, given this sort of opportunity,” Glaucon goes on, “and who didn’t touch other people’s property would be thought wretched and stupid by everyone aware of the situation, though, of course they’d praise him in public, deceiving each other for fear of suffering injustice” (360d). Having shown in this way the great opportunities that can be open to some who are willing to act unjustly, and the apparent irrationality of refusing to do so, in favorable circumstances, Glaucon gives Socrates a challenge resembling the one that the “fool” issues to Hobbes: show that justice (in Hobbes’s case, keeping one’s covenant) is the best policy.

However, there is an important difference between the two challenges, a difference that reflects the fact that Glaucon assumes that no response along the lines of the one that Hobbes attempts can do the job. Rather than asking Socrates to show that just action will yield the agent *more goods other than justice itself* – as Hobbes tries to show of covenant-keeping – Glaucon asks Socrates to show that *justice itself*, the quality of acting justly, is so valuable that it benefits the agent more than any goods other than justice could benefit him. This may sound like an even more difficult task than the one that Hobbes and Gauthier have failed to accomplish, but Socrates had invited the request by suggesting initially that this is the way he regards justice (357d), and this view of his in fact provides the framework for the entire, very un-Hobbesian theory of rationality and justice that he unfolds in the remainder of the dialogue.

There are two kinds of reasons that Glaucon may have for assuming that a “rational choice,” social contract approach cannot do the job that

23 Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), p. 34.

needs to be done. One is the problem of would-be “free riders” such as the “fool” – the problem that Gauthier addresses (and that is illustrated so dramatically by the story of “Gyges’s ring”). Glaucon may see that an argument for mutual agreement that can convince potential free riders may have to do so at the expense of excluding from fair participation in the agreement many of the people whom we thought justice or morality was supposed to protect (as Gauthier’s argument in fact does exclude them). The other reason Glaucon undoubtedly has is that an argument that seeks to show that justice or morality can yield greater amounts of goods (other than justice or morality itself) to the person who practices it seems not to explain why people might value justice or morality *for their own sake*, and why they might not just approve of, but *admire*, a person who values them in that way, and acts accordingly. (Remember Kant’s view that the “good will” is something that we find admirable.) These features of justice as it is understood by many of Plato’s contemporaries (though perhaps not by those who favor the social contract theory of justice) are the ones that he focuses on as the keys to his own, contrasting view of both rationality and justice.

Plato outlines that view in Book iv of the *Republic* and elaborates on it in Books v–ix. For our present purposes, a brief sketch of Plato’s view will be enough.²⁴ Plato proceeds from an analysis of the human “soul.” Though he concludes the dialogue with a story of rewards and punishments in the underworld after death (the “myth of Er”) – and he had presented famous arguments for the soul’s immortality in the *Phaedo* – Plato makes no appeal whatever to immortality in the course of his argument for justice in *Republic*, Books iv–ix. This argument is based not on the soul’s possible immortality but rather on the complexity of its functioning – on its “parts,” and their relationship to one another. Plato argues that in view of the internal struggles that we observe in human beings, we must conclude that their psychic functioning has at least three distinct parts: the appetitive part, the rational part, and the “spirited” (emotional) part. The appetites – drives and desires, we might say – want what they want. Every human has many of them. Sometimes

²⁴ For contrasting interpretations of Plato’s argument for justice in the *Republic* as a whole, see T. H. Irwin, *Plato’s Moral Theory. The Early and Middle Dialogues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), Chapter 7 (Irwin gives a more elaborate account in his *Plato’s Ethics* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995], Chapters 12–18), and Richard Kraut, “The Defense of Justice in Plato’s *Republic*,” in R. Kraut, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 311–337. My interpretation is more influenced by Irwin’s than by any other.

we experience an appetite that we think we should not satisfy, and we may experience a struggle between the appetite and this thought. The thought, and whatever influence it has, represents the operation of the rational part (439b). The third part, the “spirited” part, steps in when we become angry at our appetite for resisting the influence of our reason – or angry at other people for acting in ways that we consider unreasonable (439e–440d). Thus, the spirited part allies itself with the rational part; but we can tell that it is distinct from the rational part because sometimes it is hasty, rushing forward to insist on what it considers reasonable, whereas the voice of reason itself is raising doubts or objections that it isn’t immediately able to make heard because of the passionateness of the spirited part (see 441b).

Now, what Plato says about these parts of the soul is that the soul, and thus the person, is not well off unless all three are in harmony with each other, that harmony being the situation in which the rational part is deciding which appetites should be satisfied and which should not, and the appetitive part is complying with the rational part’s decisions, and the spirited part, likewise, is paying attention to the rational part, rather than rushing out on its own. When this is the case, Plato says, the person “binds together those parts . . . and *from having been many things he becomes entirely one*, moderate and harmonious. Only then does he act” (443de; emphasis added).

When Plato says that “only then does [the person] *act*” – only when her three parts have reached a harmonious unity – he is pointing to the same capacity for unity, in the self or the will, that Kant and Hegel are concerned with, and that writers such as Hobbes and Gauthier do not identify as an issue. Whether they should identify it as an issue is a question I will come back to. First, however, let us close the circle of Plato’s argument. What does all of this unity in the soul have to do with justice?

The connection, Plato suggests, is transparent. Plato entitles the soul’s internal harmony “justice” (this seems reasonable to him because he has devoted Book iii and parts of Book ii and iv to describing a similar harmony in the city, which he also calls “justice”), and it seems clear to him that a person who has this inner “justice” cannot act unjustly in relation to other people. Plato’s reason for believing this is not merely that he has given the internal and external phenomena the same *name*, but rather that injustice must represent “a rebellion by some part against the whole soul in order to rule it inappropriately,” so that “the turmoil and straying of these parts are injustice, licentiousness, cowardice,

ignorance, and, in a word, the whole of vice" (444b). Comparing the appetitive part to a many-headed beast and the rational part to a "human being within," Plato writes that someone who maintains that injustice profits a person "is simply saying that it is beneficial for him, first, to feed the multiform beast well and make it strong, . . .; second, to starve and weaken the human being within, so that he is dragged along wherever either of the other two [parts] leads" (588e). In other words, Plato suggests that someone who acts unjustly toward other people must be acting under the influence of one or more appetites, uncontrolled by her rational part, and thus not harmonious and unified but full of strife and disunity.

It is because a person's interest in acting justly towards other people reflects, in this way, her inner harmony and unity, and because that harmony and unity is (in Plato's view) an admirable thing, to be valued for its own sake, that Plato thinks he has shown how and why many people are inclined to view justice as something valuable for its own sake, and to view people who care about justice for its own sake as admirable. What they care about, he thinks, is something that is higher than the satisfaction of particular appetites, and that can be seen to have a special value that transcends all such satisfactions. To see that value and to be guided by it is to reach a higher level – the level of "unity," as I have been calling it – than a person who is guided merely by appetites, as such, can attain.

Is Plato right in thinking that someone who acts unjustly toward other people must be acting under the influence merely of appetites, uncontrolled by her rational part? This view certainly seems plausible in many particular cases. People who take advantage of other people are often acting under the impetus of strong desires or passions, and in ways that they might not approve of if they were able to reflect calmly on whether it is really best for them to satisfy those desires or passions in this case. But can we be sure that *all* injustice is necessarily like that? Are we sure that it is not possible to pursue what most people would call an unjust course of action – even a course of action that the agent herself would call unjust – in a perfectly calm and dispassionate manner, as a result of the fully rational judgment that she has more to gain from it than from acting justly, in this case?

We can infer that Plato sees this weakness in the position that he sketched in Book iv, because he goes on in subsequent books of the dialogue to consider in more detail what the rationality of the "rational part" consists in. If it is merely the ability to calculate how best to satisfy

desires that the agent happens to have, or the ability to choose a consistent set of those desires to satisfy, so as to avoid conflict among actions aimed at satisfying one desire and actions aimed at satisfying others, there seems to be no reason to expect it to be incompatible with calculating, dispassionate injustice toward others. If, on the other hand, it revises the desires that it is given, or generates new desires of its own, there might be reason to expect this to have more interesting implications. Plato's analysis of knowledge, in the famous sections of Books vi and vii that use the analogies of the sun, the line, and the cave, is directed specifically at knowledge of the good, with the goal of explaining how we can reasonably revise the conceptions of a good life that are suggested by our desires as they are initially given, and work beyond such simple accounts of the good as those that identify it with (say) pleasure or knowledge, as such (505a–c) (accounts that Plato himself appeared to be attracted to in earlier dialogues such as the *Protagoras* and the *Phaedo*). Describing this in the terms that we used in connection with Kant and Hegel, we would have to say that Plato says that knowledge of the good requires us to “go beyond” our initial desires or our initial theories, towards a “higher standard.” In Book viii, Plato describes a series of personalities – the timocratic man, the oligarchic man, the democratic man, and the tyrannical man – who all exhibit rationality of one kind or another. For one thing, each finds an inadequacy in the personality that precedes him in the series, which leads him to formulate his substitute model personality. But none of the four of them engages in anything like the comprehensive inquiry into what is good, questioning all desires and all theories, that Plato's suggested theory of knowledge calls for. At one point or another, they all plunk for an unexamined desire or passion or “theory of the good” – the timocrat for honor, the oligarch for money, the democrat for a fair, but undiscriminating treatment of all of his desires, and the tyrant for a ruling passion that involves the development of demanding desires and ambitious plans to satisfy them.²⁵ Plato's “philosopher,” on the other hand, seeks to live a truly good life, which involves questioning all of these desires and theories, so as to seek knowledge of what a truly good life would be.

To suggest how there might be such a thing as a truly good life, and how we could achieve knowledge of what it would be, T. H. Irwin

25 Here I'm drawing on T. H. Irwin's summary description of the “deviant men” in *Plato's Moral Theory*, pp. 227–234.

sketches how a person might seek to find out what constitutes a “worthwhile job” for himself:

He may find that some job does not fulfil his ideal, since he finds something lacking when he tries it. The problem is not that the job fails to contribute instrumentally to some determinate end, that, for instance, it produces too small a quantity of some internal glow or feeling of satisfaction, but that, he finds on reflection, it does not satisfy the vague ideal it was supposed to embody. Since the ideal was vague, he may discover what it requires only when he finds that his present job does not match it; he may not have realized that he values peace and quiet, or challenging work, until he tries a job without them. [The method here is that] someone proposes candidates for ultimate end, and, when he reflects on them, expresses demands which he could not have expressed previously, and realizes their deficiencies. This is the process Plato advocates both for gaining knowledge and for rational deliberation to guide the choice of ultimate ends. The elenctic process described in the *Cave*, and the ascent described in the *Symposium* and mentioned in the *Republic* [490b], are the same process, using the same methods.

(*Plato's Moral Theory*, p. 235)

This description should remind us of Hegel's claims that I seek a standard by which to assess my desires (PR §§17–18), that finding such a standard would involve systematizing my desires in some rational way (§19), “purifying” and “educating” them into a life that makes sense as a whole, for me (§§19 and 20), so that I can have something that deserves to be called a “will,” and “free” (§21). Plato, like Hegel, is trying to describe how we figure out what it is that we aspire to, and he is arguing that what we really aspire to (when we approach the question with the open mind of “the philosopher,” rather than with the ultimate arbitrariness of the timocratic man, the oligarchic man, and so on) is not just an accidental fact about ourselves, but reflects something that is defensible as being objectively good for us – a truly good life.

Naturally, this picture invites the objection, from a believer in desire-satisfaction such as Hobbes or Gauthier, that all that Plato's “philosopher” can really find out is what she desires. The searcher for a worthwhile job, a Hobbesian would object, is merely discovering in more detail what she wants, not discovering anything that is defensible as “objectively good” for her in any sense that goes beyond the fact that she desires it. What is good for her is simply whatever satisfies her desires.

Plato's response to this objection is that insofar as one takes a mere "given" – any particular desire or passion, as one experiences it – as the final authority on what to do, one's rational part is not doing its job, and one lacks the inner unity (harmony) that is the only non-negotiable necessary ingredient in a good life. As Elizabeth Anderson says, "no matter how the facts are presented to a person however naturalistically constituted, she always has room to ask whether her resulting attitudes are rational or merited or endorsable."²⁶ To which Plato adds that only insofar as one is interested in this latter question – the question of whether one's felt attitudes are rational or merited or endorsable – is one's rational part doing its job. And only insofar as one's rational part is doing its job, does one "from having been many things . . . become entirely *one*" (443d–e; emphasis added); only then, as Hegel would say, does one's will "have itself as infinite form, as its content, object, and end" (PR §21): Only then (as I put it) does something that deserves to be called a will (or, indeed, a self, or freedom) come into existence. Inquiry into what is objectively good – the famous Platonic theme of the "Forms," of which the Form of the Good is the supreme instance – is important for Plato precisely insofar as it makes it possible for a person to become "one," or (as Kant and Hegel put it) to become self-governing, and thus free.

Assuming that we grant Plato this important anti-Hobbesian point – that a good life must involve this oneness, via inquiry into the Good – will his argument for justice go through? According to Plato's more sophisticated account, in the *Republic*, Books v–ix, a person's motivation is not just given to her; rather, she can give new shape to her desires, and perhaps generate brand new ones, in response to the insight she achieves into the good. Thus, it is possible that she might shape or generate desires for the welfare or virtue or just treatment of others, even if she starts out with no such desires. As far as the *Republic* goes, however, we do not discover *why* she should shape or generate such desires. In his reconstruction of Plato's argument, Irwin turns at this point to the speech of Diotima in Plato's *Symposium* (to which he thinks Plato alludes at *Republic* 490a8–b7).²⁷ In her speech, Diotima (as reported by Socrates, who no doubt is speaking, as usual in the later dialogues, for

²⁶ Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 139.

²⁷ T. H. Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory*, pp. 234–5, and *Plato's Ethics*, pp. 302–3. Chapter 18 of *Plato's Ethics* analyzes Diotima's speech, and its relevance to justice, in detail.

Plato) gives reasons why a true lover of “virtue” in the sense of excellence – which is certainly one thing that a “philosopher,” as described in the *Republic*, must be – will wish to “give birth” to virtue in others (209c). This, Irwin suggests, is how Plato argues that a person whose rational part is doing its job must be concerned with the welfare of others (by being concerned about their virtue, which, insofar as it reflects their rational functioning, will be a major part of their welfare). If fellow-citizens influence each other’s virtue, to some degree, and thus can be concerned about each other in the same way that Diotima’s lover of virtue is concerned about others – as opportunities to “give birth” to more of what they value in themselves – that may be a sufficient basis for the ordinary duties of justice between fellow-citizens.

This highly suggestive, but undeveloped argument is spelled out further by Aristotle in his account of friendship, and of civic friendship in particular, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Even there, however, its relevance to the rationality of acting justly is still not made fully explicit, so that it is only a minority of Aristotle’s readers who take him to be addressing that issue at all.²⁸ In Chapters 5 and 6, I will suggest some affinities between what appear to be Plato’s and Aristotle’s arguments for the rationality of justice and the extended argument for the same conclusion that Hegel presents in his *Logic* and *Philosophy of Spirit* (and presupposes in his *Philosophy of Right*). The main thing I wanted to draw attention to here is the continuity between Plato’s and Hegel’s accounts of practical rationality, in contrast to the Hobbesian/empiricist approach. To finish setting the stage for Hegel’s argument in his *Logic* and *Philosophy of Spirit*, the indispensable final step is a sketch of Kant’s account of practical reason, and the argument for morality that he bases on it, to which I turn in the next section.

2.7. Kant on Autonomy and Ethics: The Apparent Failure of a Great Argument

As I indicated in 2.1, Kant is in basic agreement with Plato and Hegel on the relationship between rational self-government and desire. In Kant’s view, a person (Sally, for example) who aims to be self-governed will fail

²⁸ See T. H. Irwin, *Aristotle’s First Principles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), Chapter 18 (pp. 389–406), for a detailed reconstruction of (what Irwin takes to be) Aristotle’s argument. Another very interesting treatment of some of these issues is A. W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

if she is governed by the desires that she happens to have, for these desires – as they initially present themselves – are not herself; they are given to her by her biological inheritance or her environment, and she (on the other hand) is the one who has to decide, in each case, whether this desire is a desire that she has reason to act on, or not. This is the idea underlying Kant's "Categorical Imperative": An imperative that is "categorical" is one whose relevance does not depend upon the person in question's having any particular desire. But if a person is not to be governed, ultimately, by her desires, and if her actions are not to be purely *arbitrary* (because "self-government" can hardly be government by nothing at all), there must be something else that governs her. And the only candidate for filling this role that Kant could think of was the moral law (*Groundwork*, Ak. 446–7). This is his argument, then, for the conclusion that a person cannot be fully free without caring about morality, and other people.

But Kant seems to have overlooked another possible way of being governed by something other than one's desires. Sally could be governed not by the moral law but by prudence – by considerations of what is best for herself – as long as those considerations do not reduce to the satisfaction of her desires. If there are some things that are objectively good for people – good for them regardless of what they happen (subjectively) to want – and if Sally is governed by considerations having to do with getting those things, then she will have just as much claim to be "self-governed," it seems, as someone who is governed by the moral law.²⁹ And a person who is governed only by objective prudence could,

29 A similar point against Kant's argument is made by Bernard Williams when he states that "standing back in reflection" (as required by Kantian autonomy) does not of itself "convert [us] into being[s] whose fundamental interest lies in the harmony of all interests," nor does it give us "the motivations of justice" (*Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985], p. 69). Again, Allen Wood points out that Kant seems not to distinguish between rules that are "universal" in the sense that they *apply* to all agents (as would be the case, say, with considerations of what is objectively good for every agent), and rules that are "universal" in the sense that one could rationally will that all agents obey them (as in the first formula of the Categorical Imperative) (*Hegel's Ethical Thought* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990], p. 164). The will of an immoralist could perfectly well abide by rules that are universal in the first sense, though not by rules that are universal in the second sense. Kant needs to demonstrate that a fully rational will must abide by rules that are universal in the second sense; but he seems only to have demonstrated that it must abide by rules that are universal in the first sense. It seems that Kant has not fully come to grips with the issue of the multiplicity of agents, which creates the distinctions that Williams and Wood are pointing to. (In his *Kant's Theory of Morals* [Princeton: Princeton University

presumably, be entirely immoral: could pay no heed to what is good for other people, what is fair, and so forth. In this way, Kant's argument seems to run into exactly the same counterargument that I mentioned in connection with Plato's argument for justice in the *Republic*: that it seems that a person needn't care about morality or justice – about the rights of others – in order to be guided by a rationality that goes beyond the calculation of how to satisfy her given desires.

Probably the reason why Kant did not think of objective prudence as another possible way of being self-governed is that, like many modern philosophers, he tended to think of what is good for people as their subjective happiness, which presumably mostly reflects the extent to which their desires are satisfied. Or more precisely, like many modern philosophers, Kant did not really address the question of what is "good for" people, assuming that nothing will interest them, subjectively, except pleasure or the satisfaction of their desires. It seems not to have occurred to him that what is good for a person might be, at least in part, just as objective, just as non-reducible to the satisfaction of her desires, as he thought morality was, and that people might have reason to live a life that is really good for them (and not just one that is pleasant or that satisfies the desires they happen to have) in the same way that they have reason to obey the Categorical Imperative of morality (also not because it is pleasant or because it satisfies a desire they happen to have). In this respect, Kant differs from those in the Platonic tradition, including Aristotle and Joseph Butler, and follows, instead, the empiricist tradition of which Hobbes and Gauthier – and David Hume and Frances Hutcheson, by whom Kant was strongly influenced – are representatives.³⁰

Press, 1979], pp. 29–30 and 86–89, Bruce Aune raised what is essentially the same issue that Wood raises.)

- 30 In defending Kant's argument for the thesis that a fully rational agent must be moral against Wood's and Aune's objections (which I cited in note 29), Henry Allison says that "to adopt a maxim such as false promising in virtue of its assumed universality of applicability is not to adopt it because of its conformity to . . . an unconditional practical law. On the contrary, such a policy is deemed reasonable in the first place only because of certain presupposed ends, which derive whatever justification they might possess from the agent's desires" ("On a Presumed Gap in the Derivation of the Categorical Imperative," *Philosophical Topics* 19 [1991], p. 12; reprinted in his *Idealism and Freedom* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], pp. 143–154, at p. 153). The latter statement presupposes, and Allison does not further justify, the premise to which I am objecting here: that the relevance of ends having to do with what is good for an agent can only be due to the agent's desires. It is difficult to see how Kantians, who insist on the possible relevance of non-desire-based reasons in the case of morality, can reasonably exclude them

To see why one might think that what is good for a person does not always depend on what the person wants, imagine Sally as a person who never thinks for herself, who has no interests and forms no plans of her own, but always takes her cue from other people, and other people's interests and plans. The latter way of living seems to make her, as it were, less of a *person*. Many people would probably agree that if Sally has the capacity really to be a person, then not being one, or being less of one than she could be, makes her worse off, regardless of what she wants or desires, or how much she enjoys her (as it seems to us, truncated) life. Many of us do seem to think of certain kinds of functioning as essential parts of any really good life for a human being.³¹

2.8. Hegel's Reformulation of Kant's Argument from Autonomy to Ethics

Would accepting this idea – that a significant part of what is good for an individual may be objectively determined, not dependent on her subjective desires – require us to abandon Kant's project of deriving

in the case of rational prudence. To say that such reasons are a feature solely of morality would be to beg the question that is at issue here. I first presented this argument against Kant's position in my "Mutual Recognition and Ethics: A Hegelian Reformulation of the Kantian Argument for the Rationality of Morality," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1995): 263–270, at pp. 263–264 and p. 268, note 3. T. H. Irwin makes the same point against Kant – that he assumes without sufficient argument that only moral imperatives can be categorical – in his "Kant's Criticisms of Eudaemonism," in S. Engstrom and J. Whiting, eds., *Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics. Rethinking Happiness and Duty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 63–101, at pp. 75–79. (It was Irwin's earlier writings and lectures that directed me to this issue.) Irwin points out that Joseph Butler and Thomas Reid, two important eighteenth-century British philosophers and moral theorists, both agree with Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, and disagree with Kant, on this point. I am not aware of any published response, in defense of Kant's position, to my statement or Irwin's statement of this point. It has been suggested to me that Kant relies, not on the idea that prudence reduces to the satisfaction of inclinations, but instead on an insight that we can have, that although happiness is an appropriate end for human beings, it isn't always an *overriding* end, because morality sometimes requires us to subordinate it to moral considerations, and thus happiness is not an *unconditionally necessary* end. However, I don't see how Kant does or can demonstrate the truth of this supposed insight, with the means that he develops in the *Groundwork* or the *Critique of Practical Reason*. What reason can he give for his claim that morality overrides prudence, except for his argument (summarized at *Groundwork*, Ak. 446–447) that only morality achieves genuine autonomy? It's precisely the cogency of this argument that is challenged by Irwin and me when we point out that prudence is not necessarily a heteronomous end. Thus, the suggested defense seems to involve a *petitio principii*.

31 Robert Nozick makes this point vivid with his thought-experiment of the "experience machine," in his *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), pp. 42–45.

the obligatoriness of ethics from our autonomy (thus confirming the suspicions of critics of modern individualism that in the end it undermines the relationship between the practical reasoning of individuals, on the one hand, and morality, on the other)? I mentioned the possible objectivity of the good as a problem for Kant's project because it suggests that being guided by morality need not be the only way to be self-governing (not governed merely by one's desires). But Hegel gives us a version of Kant's argument for which the possibility of objective prudence – the possibility of being governed by what is objectively good for one – creates no problem. I call it a version of Kant's argument because it gives a central role to the conception of freedom or autonomy in which, as I indicated earlier, Hegel's thinking is very close to Kant's; but in other respects, Hegel's argument diverges considerably from Kant's, which is why it isn't vulnerable to the objection to Kant's argument that I have been developing. Hegel's argument begins by challenging something that Kant treats as essentially uncontested – the “reality” of finite things (among them, human moral agents). (I will explain what Hegel means by “reality,” here, and his argument as a whole, in Chapter 3.) It then reestablishes finite things' reality, but in a necessary relationship to an infinite that goes beyond them, and then it derives the nature of the relationships between finite things – that is, the nature of the relationships that affirm their selfhood, and thus are fully free – from their relationship to this infinite. This outline of Hegel's strategy no doubt suggests a parallel – which is, in fact, a genuine parallel – between Hegel's treatment of this issue, and *theological* treatments of it, including the “divine command theory,” according to which humans' ethical obligations derive from their relationship to God. However, Hegel's conception of God or the infinite does not focus on commands (still less on the idea of God's rewarding or punishing us for obedience or disobedience), and it is based neither on religion, as such, nor on “faith.” What it is based on is an extended metaphysical argument comparable to the arguments of Plato and Aristotle that I mentioned – and on a conception of moral, religious, and mystical experience as coinciding with and confirming, in important ways, the conclusions of this metaphysical argument. And despite the different trajectory that Hegel's argument takes, its first step is intimately linked to the first step of Kant's argument because it is a defense of the *reality* of the rational freedom or autonomy that (as Hegel agrees with Kant) is a central feature of human existence, against skeptical criticisms to which Kant's conception of freedom or autonomy, in its original form,

is vulnerable. Hegel's challenge to the reality of finite things, and his reestablishment of that reality in a necessary relationship – *through* freedom and autonomy – to an infinite that goes beyond their finitude, are his way of defending the reality of freedom or autonomy. But this reconception of our reality, as free beings, is *also* his solution to the problem of the rationality of ethics. Chapter 3 (3.8–3.17) gives a preliminary overview of this reconception, in the form of “true infinity,” and the full argument is analyzed in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6.

2.9. Kant and Hegel on God and the World

It will be clear from what I have just been saying that the theological aspect of Hegel's project – which I signalled in the title of my book – is not a negligible one. Hegel's theology is not based on Biblical revelation, as such,³² and it is not a *traditional* Christian theology, but neither is it a humanism with no serious metaphysical commitments. Hegel is just as sincere in his objections to Enlightenment deism and atheism as he is in his objections to the traditional Christian theologies that he criticizes as embodying an “unhappy consciousness,” for which the “one-fold unchangeable” and the “multifold changeable” – God and the world, in effect – are “beings that are *alien to one another*” [*einander fremde Wesen*] (PhG §§208; emphasis added). This talk of “alien”-ness reminds us of Hegel's complaint, in “The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate,” of the “alien”-ness and enslavement that are produced by the polar opposition of reason to the inclinations, in Kant's conception of practical reasoning (see 2.2). But just as Hegel doesn't simply reject Kant's dualism of reason and the inclinations, when he finds that it makes the inclinations alien to and a slave of reason, so also he doesn't simply reject the traditional Christian dualism of God and the world when he finds that it creates a similar alienness and servitude. Unlike the Enlightenment's anti-theological humanists, Hegel thinks that there is a significant *truth* in this Christian dualism, a truth that he undertakes to preserve in his own conceptions of “true infinity,” of the relation between nature and “Spirit,” and of God as “absolute Spirit.”

I assume that readers have some acquaintance with Enlightenment attitudes toward God, exemplified (for example) in Diderot's and

32 What I mean by this is that Hegel thinks that we can know God's nature and existence without appealing to the authority of the Bible as a supposedly divinely inspired revelation.

Voltaire's deism and in Bayle's and Hume's apparent atheism. In general, the eighteenth century's leading thinkers, being skeptical about "revelation" and about traditional metaphysical arguments for God's existence, seek ways in which human beings can, if necessary, get along without God. Kant's position, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is that the metaphysical proofs of God's existence are all fallacious: They claim to prove things that cannot be proven, because human knowledge can only extend to "phenomena," to objects of possible experience, of which God is not one. However, Kant does assign a significant "regulative" role to the idea of God (along with those of freedom and the whole of the world), in the same Critique, and in the *Critique of Practical Reason* he argues that although God's existence cannot be *known*, God's existence (together with freedom and the immortality of the soul) is a necessary "*postulate*" of morality – the object of a necessary "practical faith" (cf. B xxx). Hegel, however, objects to Kant's polar opposition of theoretical and practical realms (as well as to his other polar opposition between "noumena" and "phenomena"). He sees these as creating the same sort of "alien"-ness that he saw in the relationship between reason and inclinations, in practical reasoning as Kant described it, and he argues that this sheer alienness prevents us from understanding not only the relationship between the alien domains but also the relata themselves, as *realities*. So he sets out to show, contrary to Kant, how theoretical and practical thinking intertwine, at a deep level of our thinking and being, and how our knowledge of ourselves and the world likewise intertwines with our knowledge of freedom and of God, so that we have just as good reason to claim to know the existence and nature of freedom and of God as we have to claim to know the existence and nature of ourselves and the world.

In arguing this, however, Hegel does not intend to reestablish the kind of theology that was prevalent before the Enlightenment – the "unhappy consciousness" of alienness. The "God" whose existence Hegel aims to establish is not the polar opposite of the world, because a polar opposite doesn't truly transcend what it is opposed to – rather, it is *defined* by what it is opposed to: "*flight is not a liberation from what is . . . fled from; the one that excludes still remains connected to [in Verbindung mit] what it excludes*" (WL 5:196/GW 21:163, 10–13/175; emphasis added), and therefore doesn't really go beyond and isn't really liberated from what it excludes (or "flees from"). Such a "God" isn't really free, and hence isn't really God. The only way for God to truly transcend the world, be free, and be God, Hegel maintains, is for God to be the world's

self-transcendence (as God, in turn, is the full *realization* of the world). This is Hegel's conception of "true infinity," which I will lay out in Chapter 3, and that underlies his notions of the "Concept" and "Spirit" as well (Chapters 5 and 6). It's the same conception by which he thinks we can overcome the alienness of reason vis-à-vis the inclinations (as I indicated in 2.2), the apparent incompatibility of responsibility and natural determinism (2.3), and the apparent disconnection between individuals, and between freedom and ethics (2.5–2.8).

Interpretations of Hegel's attitude toward theology tend to assimilate what he offers either (1) to the Enlightenment model (which continues to be very influential, especially among academics), or (2) to the traditional Christian theology that Hegel himself criticizes as embodying an "unhappy consciousness," or (3) to various late-antique or occultist sects (Gnosticism, Hermeticism). I think that a systematic interpretation should enable us to avoid all three of these tendencies – or to combine the virtues of all of them – by seeing how Hegel does justice both to traditional theology and to the Enlightenment, without fully agreeing with either of them, and without being guided by any sectarian occultist tradition, though he certainly is *interested* in those traditions insofar as they anticipate his own efforts to supersede, critically, the opposition between traditional theology and the Enlightenment.³³

33 Ludwig Feuerbach, in his influential early critique of Hegel's metaphysical system, took Hegel to be a theist of the traditional kind, and rejected him as such (see, for example, his "Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy," in *The Fiery Brook. Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach*, trans. Z. Hanfi [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972], theses 12, 16, 22, and 23). Karl Ameriks, on the other hand, takes Hegel's critique of the "unhappy consciousness" to show that Hegel rejected traditional theism almost as flatly as Feuerbach did (p. 260 in his "Feuerbach, Marx, and Kierkegaard," in Karl Ameriks, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000]). Alexandre Kojève, in his *Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), translated by James H. Nichols as *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), split the difference between the Enlightenment and Christian orthodoxy by praising Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* as atheistic while condemning his *Logic* and his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* as theistic (*Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, pp. 146–147). Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Die Christliche Gnosis* (Tübingen: Osiander, 1835), diagnosed Hegel as a representative of the Gnostic heresy (in which Baur seems to be prepared to follow him). Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), identifies Hegel more specifically with Valentinian Gnosticism (p. 20). Glenn Alexander Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), argues that "we *must* understand Hegel as a Hermetic thinker, if we are to truly understand him at all" (p. 2), and presents extensive evidence of Hegel's interest in the Hermetic ideas of Jacob Böhme, F. C. Oetinger, the Freemasons and Rosicrucians, and so forth, and structural parallels between Hegel's ideas and theirs. None of these authors consider how Hegel might resolve the ongoing modern dispute

From what I've said in this chapter about the major problems that Hegel's theory of freedom addresses – the nature of practical reasoning, the nature and reality of freedom, the relation between individual freedom and morality, and the relation between the world and God – and about the way in which Hegel approaches them, it will be evident that in every case, the nature of the relationship between particularity and “universality,” or the “higher standard” – how to overcome their apparent “alienness” to each other, without collapsing one pole into the other – will be central. Hegel's account of how to do this, and of the consequences of doing it, begins in his account of the relation between the “finite” and the “infinite,” to which we will turn in Chapter 3.

between religion, or supernaturalism, and the Enlightenment's naturalistic atheism or deism, by finding mutually compatible elements of truth on both sides (see 3.17; and for a more detailed response to Magee, see 3.18).

REALITY, FREEDOM, AND GOD (*SCIENCE OF LOGIC* I)

3.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with Hegel's account of "determinate being" (*Dasein*), the "ought," and "infinity," in the "Quality" section of the first part – the Doctrine of Being – of his *Science of Logic*. This is the beginning of Hegel's extensive analysis of reality, freedom, subjectivity, and God, in the Logic. Hegel doesn't often use the word "God" in the Logic; he says more about "freedom" and the "subject" in the final part of the Logic (the Doctrine of the Concept) than in the earlier parts; and his account of all of these topics develops additional dimensions in the *Philosophy of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Right*. But I will show that his accounts in the Doctrine of Being of what he calls "negativity" and "true infinity" address fundamental issues about reality, freedom, subjectivity, and God in a way that establishes a pattern that the rest of his philosophical system doesn't depart from, but only elaborates. In particular, the articulation of "negativity" in "true infinity" shows: (1) how we can preserve what is true in Kant's respect for nature and in his conception of freedom without becoming entangled in the problems of the two "worlds" or two "standpoints" that Kant believed this combination required; (2) how thought is more fundamental than being, or (as Hegel puts it) how "substance" becomes "subject"; and (3) what is true, and not a mere "projection" of features of humanity, in traditional theism. It is also crucial to interpreting (4) Hegel's famous dictum, in the *Philosophy of Right*, that "what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational" (PR 24/20) – which has been thought by many readers to undermine the idea of rational criticism of society and thus the idea of individual freedom – and Hegel's critique of the supposed "emptiness"

of Kantian ethics, and his alternative, non-Kantian demonstration that autonomy requires ethics.

The relevance of negativity and true infinity to Hegel's ethical and social theories, and the effective ubiquity of the topic of freedom in Hegel's *Logic* and his system, are underlined by the fact that that in his lectures, Hegel used the same formula for the "concrete concept of *freedom*" – namely, that 'I' "is with itself in its limitation, in this other" (PR §7A; emphasis added) – that he used for true infinity: "the true infinity consists . . . in being with itself in its other" (EL §94A; compare EG §386A). (In the text of PR §7R, what Hegel explicitly connects with the will is "singularity" and the Concept, which figure in the third part of the *Logic*, but it will become clear that negativity and true infinity are intimately connected to these later developments in the *Logic*.) Since (2), (3), and (4) are among the most controversial major features of Hegel's philosophy, a proper understanding of how he argues for them can render his philosophy as a whole much more plausible than it is without such an understanding. And (1), Hegel's relation to Kant, is, of course, another major domain of difficulty for interpreters of what Hegel is up to, and for his critics.

In view of true infinity's importance for all of these issues, it is not surprising that in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel in fact describes it as "the fundamental concept [*Grundbegriff*] of philosophy" (EL §95R; see 3.10, below). Elsewhere he makes similar remarks about negativity, which I will show is a germinal version of the same idea.

As I've indicated, I will be arguing that Hegel agrees with Kant about an important feature of freedom, but reconceives it in a way that enables him to avoid the problems that Kant's conception runs into. To make clear precisely what Hegel takes over and what he does not take over from Kant, I should explain that besides (i) the two-worlds or two-aspects theory, there is another significant part of Kant's thinking about freedom that Hegel does not try to defend. This is (ii) the fundamental contrast between "spontaneity" and "receptivity," which plays a central role in Kant's thinking about freedom especially in the *Antinomies* of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (and which encourages Kant in his adoption of (i)). The aspect of Kant's thinking about freedom that Hegel *does* take over and defend is (iii) the notion, which is fundamental for Kant's ethics, that the fullest form of freedom, which Kant calls "autonomy," involves the agent's going beyond whatever contingent, more or less natural inclinations she may experience, by questioning their authority and seeking to be guided by something that is more ultimate and

more reflective of *herself*. (This more ultimate thing, Kant of course takes to be the Categorical Imperative.) This third idea, (iii), which is what I referred to in the previous chapter as Kant's "rationalism" about practical reasoning, has less to do (directly, at any rate) with his specific form of metaphysics or epistemology, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. But in relation to non-Kantian conceptions of human functioning, such as those of Hobbes and Hume, in modern philosophy, it is at least as distinctive and controversial as (i) and (ii) are; and if, as seems plausible, full freedom involves being self-governed rather than governed by something that is ultimately alien to oneself, then (iii), by itself, has at least as much right to be called a theory of *freedom* as (i) and (ii) do. Indeed, it may be (as Hegel evidently believes it is) Kant's most important single contribution to the understanding of freedom.¹

Now the problem is that Kant, with some plausibility, takes the form of freedom that is described in (iii) to be incompatible with nature, as Kant understands nature. He doubts that a process of rational questioning that goes beyond inclinations for its guidance can be understood as a part of nature, with its (as he thinks) thorough-going determinism, because that determinism will operate, Kant assumes, through our being guided, ultimately, by certain finite properties – "inclinations" – that will be effectively unquestioned, whereas the defining feature of fully rational functioning is that it questions everything, and finds value, ultimately, only in rational functioning itself (as embodied in "rational agents": the "Kingdom of Ends"). So, to deal with the incompatibility of freedom with nature that seems to result from these assumptions, Kant has recourse to (i): He allocates freedom either to a separate world from the world that he associates with nature, or to a separate "standpoint" from the standpoint that he associates with knowledge of nature, distinguishing the "phenomenal" world or the standpoint of natural determinism from the "noumenal" world or the standpoint of freedom (see, in particular, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak. 451–2). He thus creates for himself the difficult problem of how to relate these two worlds or standpoints to each other. Can one be understood from within the other? If not, how can they both be real (or provide access to reality)? Can we make sense of the idea of there being two realities, which are not subsumed within some more comprehensive

1 See 2.4, in Chapter 2, for comments on the two diverging themes – "rationalist" and "voluntarist" – in Kant's thinking about freedom.

reality of which they are merely parts – or of there being two valid standpoints, which are not judged valid from some more comprehensive standpoint? Can we take fully seriously something, such as our supposed freedom, which we can't relate to such a more comprehensive reality or standpoint?

Hegel's response to these problems, which is developed in the argument by which he leads up to true infinity, is that, while he shares Kant's conception of freedom as in some way transcending the agent's finite, natural characteristics, he intends to show that in doing this, freedom is not radically opposed to nature, but instead freedom (as we might say) *consummates* nature. Hegel gives a persuasive account of "reality" according to which nature without freedom is not fully *real*, so that if we are inclined to regard nature as real, we must see it as internally related to and consummated by freedom. And consequently, it makes no sense to see nature and freedom, as Kant does, as two realms or standpoints that are co-equal and opposed to one another. We can do justice to the way in which freedom goes beyond nature, by understanding this as an internal feature of the way in which freedom renders nature fully real, rather than as a way in which freedom is radically opposed to nature. The other striking features of Hegel's philosophy that I mentioned – his "idealism," his philosophical theology, and his ethical and social theories – likewise derive their special character very much from this central conceptual move.

Hegel's diagnosis of problems in finite being – problems which, he argues, require finite being to be linked to infinity and thus to freedom – and his account of ("spurious" and "true") infinity, have both been found problematic by influential recent commentators.² I will show

² I am referring particularly to Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Paul Guyer, "Hegel, Leibniz and the Contradiction in the Finite," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 40 (1979): 75–98, also available in German in Rolf-Peter Horstmann, ed., *Seminar: Dialektik in der Philosophie Hegels* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), pp. 230–260; Paul Guyer, "Thought and Being: Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy," in Frederick C. Beiser, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Paul Guyer, "Absolute Idealism and the Rejection of Kantian Dualism," in Karl Ameriks, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Michael Theunissen, "Begriff und Realität. Hegels Aufhebung des metaphysischen Wahrheitsbegriffs," in the same volume edited by Rolf-Peter Horstmann; and Michael Theunissen, *Sein und Schein. Die kritische Funktion der hegelschen Logik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), to all of which I will be responding in the text and footnotes, to follow, and in succeeding chapters. I have not found responses to Taylor, Guyer, or Theunissen, in the literature, that clarify the issues that I'm addressing here.

that these commentators have misinterpreted Hegel, and that when we understand his argument correctly, it provides an attractive alternative to Kant's "two-worlds" or "two-standpoints" approach to the problem of freedom, while preserving what is most attractive in Kant's conception of freedom, which is (as in (iii)) its notion of transcending finite natural inclinations through unlimited rational questioning. Everyone knows that Hegel claims somehow to overcome Kantian dualisms. But in the case of this fundamental dualism, between freedom and being or nature, no one has explained just how Hegel does this, or just what he preserves from Kant, in doing it. When we understand this, we will see that Hegel has a lot more to contribute to the discussion of the nature and status of freedom than is generally recognized. And when we see how the same argument also underlies Hegel's idealism, his philosophical theology, and his ethical and social thinking, we will have a better understanding both of his distinctive positions in these areas and of his "system" as a whole.

To clarify how this chapter relates to the later chapters in the book, I should explain that Hegel's procedure is to develop his ideas – and his conception of freedom, in particular – from their absolutely simplest "germ" form through many phases of increasing complexity and sophistication. This is why freedom, which is first mentioned by name in the Logic's chapter on "Quality," is still being discussed (as "the realm of freedom") in the Logic's final section, the Doctrine of the Concept, and likewise in the third book of Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, the *Philosophy of Spirit* (as well as in the *Philosophy of Right*, whose subject matter coincides with that of a major section of the *Philosophy of Spirit*). The result of this procedure of Hegel's is that fundamentally important things are said about freedom at a very early stage in his discussion, in "Quality," while the full implications of these things are developed only very gradually through the remainder of the system. That is why we will be able to learn some crucially important things about Hegel's relation to Kant's problems with freedom from the very first part of Hegel's Logic, even though further discussions of and elaborations on that relation take place throughout the remainder of Hegel's system, and throughout the remainder of this book. It is why we can find what amounts to a "key" to Hegel's system in the first part of the Logic, even though the full power of that key will not be apparent until we have finished with the System.

I think it is clear that the *Science of Logic* (together with the *Encyclopedia* and the *Philosophy of Right*) presents Hegel's most systematic and mature

treatment of these issues, so I haven't examined in detail the earlier treatments of them in his Jena writings, including the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For purposes of clarification, I sketch in some of these earlier ideas in section 3.21 (and see notes 17 and 28). I should also explain that by relating Hegel's efforts, in "Quality," to Kant, I do not by any means intend to suggest that Hegel isn't equally concerned in this analysis with other philosophical traditions, and in particular with Plato, Aristotle, and Spinoza. After all, Kant has no *monopoly* on the idea of the authority of unlimited rational questioning; something very similar is presumably at work in Plato's conception of knowledge, in Aristotle's conception of the human "function," and in Spinoza's adaptation of their ideas. I think there is an important sense in which Hegel is trying, here, to integrate what he takes to be true in Kant with what he takes to be true in Plato, in Aristotle, and in Spinoza, though for reasons of space I won't go into most of these connections in detail (but see notes 11 and 18).³

After presenting Hegel's account of true infinity and explaining its relevance to freedom, idealism, and God, I will analyze the "collapse" that he says takes place in the idea of true infinity (as embodied in what he calls "being-for-self"), and the way in which that collapse sets the agenda for the remainder of the Logic. I begin with a brief introduction to the *Logic* as a whole.

3.2. Objective Thinking

Hegel says in his Introduction that his Logic studies "objective thinking" – that is, "thought in so far as this is just as much the object [*Sache*] in its own self, or the object in its own self in so far as it is equally pure thought" (WL 5:43/GW 21:33,18–21/49). That the thought studied by the Logic is "the object in its own self" can be interpreted in two ways. It can be interpreted as meaning (1) that mere thinking, unrelated to reality, is of no interest to logic; and likewise reality unrelated

3 For a detailed account of Hegel's relationship to Aristotle (which, however, unfortunately doesn't deal with Hegel's argument in "Quality"), see A. Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). An illuminating account of Hegel's relation to Aristotle is André Doz, *La Logique de Hegel et les Problèmes Traditionnels de l'Ontologie* (Paris: Vrin, 1987); see also Klaus Brinkmann, *Aristoteles' allgemeine und spezielle Metaphysik* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1979). A comprehensive survey of Hegel's relationships to Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, and Kant is given by Klaus Düsing, *Hegel und die Geschichte der Philosophie. Ontologie und Dialektik in Antike und Neuzeit* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), which includes a detailed survey of the scholarly literature up to that date.

to thinking – unformulated or unformulable in thoughts – is of no interest to it. What interests logic is thought insofar as it deals with reality, and reality insofar as thought can deal with it. That thought is the object itself can *also* be interpreted as meaning (2) that true objects, those that are fully real, have the character of thought just as much as they have the character of mere being or existence. Hegel here means both (1) *and* (2), because he thinks that (2) has been established by his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (see WL 5:43/GW 21:33,8–10/49). However, he also gives an extensive argument for (2) *within* the Logic, which will concern us in this chapter and the next two chapters, and which is entirely independent of the *Phenomenology*. It seems that the argument of the Logic itself could proceed, initially, on the basis of (1), alone, in which case the Logic would not depend upon the *Phenomenology* for its cogency. I will return to (2) – to Hegel's idealism, summarized in his famous thesis that we must understand “the true not only as *substance* but equally as *subject*” (PhG, p. 23, §17) – in 3.14 and in Chapter 5, where I will be in a position to explain what Hegel means by it. But I can say in advance that what he means is *not* that non-mental reality is located “in” any mind or minds, or that the mind “imposes” certain features on a reality that is in other respects external to it. Hegel's “absolute idealism” is different both from George Berkeley's (as Hegel calls it) “subjective idealism,” and from Kant's “transcendental idealism,” and I will suggest that it is more plausible than either of them.⁴

3.3. Being

As the first topic for his study of objective thinking, Hegel chooses pure being. He chooses it because thought must have some sort of content, but the content that it's assumed to have at the beginning of the investigation must not be anything specific, or the nature of that specific content might prejudice the subsequent developments. So he chooses the least specific content that he can think of: being that is pure in the sense that it has no particular characteristics whatever. All that

4 For an energetic argument against the traditional assumption that post-Kantian German “idealism” somehow continued the subjectivism of Berkeley's idealism, see Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism. The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). An important argument that Hegel, in particular, is continuing neither Berkeleyan nor Kantian idealism is Kenneth R. Westphal's *Hegel's Epistemological Realism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989).

it has is “immediacy” (WL 5:82/GW 21:68,3/82): it is not mediated by anything other than itself.

Hegel’s choice of “being” as his point of departure does not imply any belief that it is somehow the most fundamental concept for logic or for philosophy. Quite the reverse, in fact: the most basic, because most “concrete,” concept of the Logic will be the realized “Concept,” which Hegel calls the “Idea,” and the most basic concept of the system as a whole will be Absolute Spirit, because in each case these concepts will have been shown to be indispensable for making workable sense of all of the concepts that go before them, beginning with being. As Hegel often says, the “truest” concepts – those that are least in need of reformulation – are the *results* of the dialectical process, rather than its points of departure.

Hegel’s initial development of pure being is the famous first triad of the Logic: Being, Nothing, and Becoming. Pure being, Hegel says, contains no distinguishable determination or content, because that would set up a contrast within or outside it that would eliminate its purity. So “it is pure indeterminateness and emptiness” (WL 5:82/GW 21:69/82). “There is *nothing* to be intuited in it, if one can speak here of intuiting; or, it is only this pure intuiting itself. Just as little is anything to be thought in it, or it is equally only this empty thinking” (ibid.). But this indeterminate immediacy is “in deed [*in der Tat*] *nothing*” (WL 5:82/GW 21:69,3/82). Since being has no determinacy or content, there is nothing, in practice, to distinguish it from nothing. Turning, then, to nothing, Hegel observes that inasmuch as we assume that there is “a difference between intuiting or thinking something or *nothing*,” nothing has a distinct “meaning” (*Bedeutung*), and in that sense nothing “*is* (exists) in our intuiting or thinking” (WL 5:82/GW 21:69/82). But this makes nothing “the same empty intuiting or thinking as pure being.” And thus *nothing* is “the same determination, or rather absence of determination, and thus altogether *the same as, pure being*” (ibid.; emphasis added). Thus, being has become (turned out to be) nothing, and nothing has become (turned out to be) being. “Their *truth*, then, is this movement of the immediate vanishing of the one in the other: *becoming* [*Werden*], a movement in which both are distinguished, but by a difference which has equally immediately dissolved itself” (WL 5:83/GW 21:69–70/83).

Hegel anticipates the likely objection that if “being and nothing are the same,” as he has asserted, “then it is the same whether this house is or is not, whether these hundred dollars are part of my fortune or

not" (WL 5:87/GW 21:72/85). He replies that the objection misses the meaning of his assertion, which has to do not with determinate or finite beings, such as this house or my fortune, which are what they are through their relations to other determinate or finite beings in the world, but rather with "the pure abstractions of being and nothing" (WL 5:87/GW 21:72/86). Taken in abstraction from relations to other determinate or finite beings, being and nothing are the same.

So Hegel concludes, contrary to Parmenides (WL 5:84/GW 21:70,21/83) as well as to "so-called ordinary common sense" (which Hegel contrasts with logical "science" [WL 5:86/GW 21:71,34–36/84]), that "*nowhere on heaven or on earth is there anything that does not contain within itself both being and nothing*" (WL 5:86/GW 21:71,6–8/85). This is because all the subsequent categories of his Logic, such as "determinate being, quality, and generally all philosophical Concepts" (WL 5:86/GW 21:72,25/85), and thus everything that is determinate and real, will contain both of them. And this presence of both being and nothing within everything that is determinate and real will continue to be *important*, because

The thinking or representing [*Vorstellen*] which has before it only a specific, determinate being [*ein bestimmtes Sein, das Dasein*], must be *referred back* to the previously mentioned beginning of the science made by Parmenides, who purified and elevated his representation, and thus also that of posterity, to *pure thought*, and thereby created the element of the science.

(WL 5:90–91/GW 21:75–76/88; emphasis added)

That is, it won't be enough to describe something as (for example) a "determinate being": it will still be necessary to take into account the presence of Parmenides's abstract "being," within that determinate being. Why will this be necessary? Hegel says that this

is to be regarded not only as the very first theoretical demand but even as the very first practical demand, as well. When for example a fuss is made about the hundred dollars, that it does make a difference to the state of my fortune whether I *have* them or *not*... we can remind ourselves that man *ought* to elevate himself to that abstract universality in his attitude [*Gesinnung*] in which he is indeed indifferent to the existence or non-existence of the hundred dollars... just as it ought to be a matter of indifference to him whether *he* is or is not,

(WL 5:91/GW 21:76,2–3/89; emphasis added)

which is a duty that is recognized, Hegel says, both by Romans and by Christians.

What in the world does this apparently *moral* self-“elevation” have to do with issues of actual being and non-being? Hegel doesn’t explain the connection, here, but it will be absolutely central to his Logic as a whole, into which it will make a formal and explicit entrance in the next chapter of this same section when Hegel introduces the category of the “ought” as the way in which finite being “goes beyond itself” into infinity, and thus becomes capable of full “reality.” (A germinal version of this “going beyond” is already present in the Something’s “negation of the negation,” prior to the discussion of finitude and infinity.) Hegel is going to argue that the presence of a certain kind of moral effort – and of a certain kind of intellectual effort, of which the moral effort is actually a sub-species – in fact makes a crucial difference to what can be said to be “real,” “actual,” and so forth. The “abstraction” that Parmenides engaged in when he focussed exclusively on “being” and argued against the reality of “nothing” is one expression, in Hegel’s view, of this special moral or intellectual effort, so that even though Hegel thinks that Parmenides’s thesis about nothing was mistaken, he believes that the process of abstraction that led Parmenides to that thesis exhibits an indispensable *aspect* of reality, to which we should be “referred back” when we are contemplating such apparently simple and commonsensical concepts as “determinate being.” Section 3.7 of this chapter (together with Sections 5.5–5.7 in Chapter 5) will explain the role of this “abstraction” in some detail.

The immediate upshot of Hegel’s discussion of being and nothing is, as I said, “becoming.” This is not just an abstract “unity” of being and nothing; rather, “it consists in this movement, that pure being is immediate and one-fold, that it is therefore equally pure nothing, that there *is* a difference between them, but a difference that no less *supersedes itself* and *is not*” (WL 5:95/GW 21:83,22–26/92). To make room for becoming, being and nothing must be demoted to “moments” of this movement, “still different, but superseded” (WL 5:112/GW 21:92,21–23/105). Becoming, then, takes two forms – the becoming of being from nothing, and the becoming of nothing from being: that is, coming-into-being (*Entstehen*) and ceasing-to-be (*Vergehen*). Both being and nothing “vanish” in this process (because being turns out to be nothing, and nothing turns out to be being), and as a result becoming, which depends on the difference between them, also vanishes (WL 5:113/GW 21:93/106). The resulting state of vanishment is not, however, just *nothing*, “because

in that case it would just be a relapse into one of the determinations that were already superseded [that is, into nothing], and not the result [*Resultat*] of nothing *and of being*. It is the unity of being and nothing which has settled into a stable one-foldness," a one-foldness that is "*being*, no longer however in its original form, but rather as a *determination of the whole*," or a "one-sided *immediate* unity of these moments," which Hegel calls "*Dasein*" (commonly translated as "determinate being") (WL 5:113/GW 21:94/106; emphasis added).

This last phase of the argument, in which Hegel maintains that the vanishing of being and nothing can't yield a mere *nothing*, is (once again) vital for his overall project in the Logic. If the "movement" that results from conceptual scrutiny of the kind that he is engaged in could simply cancel itself out and yield nothing, it wouldn't get anywhere. Here he tells us why it doesn't do that: because if the result *were* "nothing," it would reflect only *one* of the two elements of the problem that has to be resolved, and thus it wouldn't be a real solution, or, as he says, a "result." (In using the words "moment" and "result," Hegel has in mind the analogy of the parallelogram of forces, in mechanics, in which two "moments" are combined into a "resultant" force [WL 5:114/GW 21:95,36–6/107].) That is why Hegel's famous process of "*Aufhebung*" or "supersession" (often translated as "sublation") both "cancels" and "preserves" what it begins with, as Hegel goes on to point out in his "Remark" (WL 5:114/GW 21:94,15–18/107). It *cancels* what it starts out with because it must somehow go beyond it; but at the same time it *preserves* what it starts out with because it's only by preserving what it starts out with, in some form, that it can be the "result" of what it starts out with, and avoid falling back into only one of the aspects of what it started out with (namely, the negative aspect, the "nothing"), and not reflecting the other aspect as well.

Against Hegel's notion of "supersession" or (as Hegel also calls it) "*determinate* negation," Michael Rosen objects that in order to arrive at the conclusion that negation that is properly understood must "contain" (as well as cancelling) what it negates – via the assumption (not stated by Hegel) that an instance of negation, like an "operation [that is] performed upon some material," must "adapt itself to the contours of whatever it is that is to be negated" – Hegel appears to make "the traditional, but paralogistic, assumption of equating negation with an ordinary transitive verb of action."⁵ Hegel's response to this objection

5 Michael Rosen, *Hegel's Dialectic and Its Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 32.

is that what he is designating as “negation” is not simply the intellectual operation that we usually refer to by that word (and that we might also call “denying” the truth of a proposition or of a predication); rather, what Hegel has in mind is the construction of a contrasting statement or position, one that addresses the *issue* that was addressed by the position that is being “negated,” while revising the first position’s view of the issue. When Hegel says that the new statement or position must be a “result” of both of the prior positions, rather than merely repeating one of them (namely, in this case, “nothing”), he means that it should respect the partial truth that is or may be contained in each of them. As far as his discussion has so far revealed, being and nothing are both legitimate conceptions of what it is that we discuss when we open our mouths. It seems that they can’t both simultaneously be fully adequate conceptions, since each of them “becomes” the other, rather than remaining itself; so a new conception is needed that will embody what is true in each of them, while being “stable” rather than constantly becoming something other than itself. “Determinate being” (*Dasein*) presents itself as a candidate for this role. No reason has been given for rejecting either being or nothing *in toto*; thus if they can be “preserved,” in part, within “determinate being,” while their instability is overcome, they should be so preserved. If we are interested in making intellectual progress, and not merely in rejecting proposals that have flaws, we should try to find a “result” of a problem – a reconciling conception that grants some truth to the prior, problematic conceptions – rather than flatly rejecting those conceptions. Hegel’s procedure of “supersession” or “determinate negation” is an optimistic one, which refuses to give up anything completely until good reasons have been given for giving it up completely.

3.4. Determinate Being, Quality, and the Beginning of the Subject

The main discussion that we will be considering in this chapter is Hegel’s treatment of “determinate being” (*Dasein*). Quality is the way in which determinate being is determinate. (“Determinate,” here, means “specific,” rather than externally “determined,” by, for example, causation.) Hegel’s treatment of the idea of something’s being itself – “being-within-self,” *Insichsein* – and eventually his treatment of the “ought” and the self-transcending “infinite,” will emerge from his consideration of what it is for determinate being to be a specific quality.

Hegel describes the determinateness of quality as involving both "reality" and "negation." These are the successors, within determinate being, of being and nothing (WL 5: 118/GW 21:98–99,29–35/111). What Hegel seems to have specifically in mind, in connection with "negation," is that qualities are organized in what we might call a conceptual space, such that being one particular quality is *not* being the other qualities that are conceptually related to it. Being the quality, "red," for example, is not just being a conceptually indeterminate "something or other," knowable only by direct inspection; rather, it is being something that belongs in the conceptual space of *color*, and thus it is not being the color, "blue," the color, "yellow," and so on. In this way, the identity of the quality, "red," essentially involves reference to what that quality is *not*. It essentially involves "negation."⁶ Hegel sometimes refers to this dependence of quality on other qualities as "alteration" (WL 5:127/GW 21:106,8–9/118; EL §92,A), but it's important to remember that in this initial context of quality as such, there is nothing analogous to time (or space) in which *literal* alteration could take place, so the term should be understood as referring to a relationship of logical dependency rather than to one of temporal sequence or transformation, as such.

Under the heading of "*reality*," in contrast to "negation," Hegel seems to want to capture a thought shared by philosophers such as John Duns Scotus, F. H. Jacobi, and C. S. Peirce, who stress an irreducible brute "this-ness," or *haecceitas*, distinct from any relatedness or subsumption, as essential to reality. It seems to them that what a particular determinate being or quality is should just be a fact about *it*, rather than being a fact about how it relates to innumerable other determinate beings or qualities.⁷ Hegel's introduction of "negation" alongside of "reality"

6 See Justus Hartnack, *An Introduction to Hegel's Logic*, p. 20; Clark Butler, *Hegel's Logic. Between Dialectic and History*, p. 46; P. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels Analytische Philosophie*, pp. 126–7.

7 Paul Guyer traces Hegel's assumption that a being ought to have its quality by virtue of itself back to Leibniz's principle that "the predicate is in the subject," and Guyer interprets Hegel's entire subsequent argument for the "contradictory" nature of finitude, which I discuss in sections 3.6 and 3.7, as relying on that principle, thus making it appear that Hegel neglects the alternative possibility that some predicates are simply relational, and do not belong to the individual, taken by itself ("Hegel, Leibniz and the Contradiction in the Finite," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 40 [1979]: 75–98). The interpretation that I adopt, on the other hand, does not require Hegel to ignore the possibility of relational predicates, since it argues that even such paradigmatically monadic predicates as color (monadic, that is, if one ignores Lockean arguments about secondary qualities)

makes it clear that “reality” (as something like “this-ness”) is not without problems, but that doesn’t cause him to abandon it. Working its problems out will, in effect, be the motor of the Logic as a whole.

If Hegel were asked: Why should we be concerned about this “reality” of determinate being? Why couldn’t we just accept the notion that all qualities are interdependent, defined by their relations to other qualities, “all the way down,” with no remainder (and that all of them are thereby equally “real” or equally “unreal”)? – his answer would be that if something *could* be what it is by virtue of itself, rather than solely by virtue of its relations to other things, it would clearly be *more* real, when taken by itself, than something that depends on its relations to other things to make it what it is. This is not to say that the thing that depends on other things is, in any sense, *illusory* – the “reality” that we’re talking about here is not contrasted with illusion, but with depending on others to determine what one is. Something that makes itself what it is has greater *self-sufficiency* than something that doesn’t do this, and this self-sufficiency is likely to be among the things that we think of when we think of “reality.” If it is among the things we think of, this could be because we’re aware that “reality” – like the word that Hegel uses, which is *real*, *Realität* – is derived from the Latin *res*, or “thing,” so that it contrasts not only with illusion but with anything that is less independent or self-sufficient than a thing.

To see that reality in this sense (self-sufficiency, rather than non-illusoriness) could be a matter of *degree* – that something can be more or less self-sufficient than something else – consider nature as a whole. If nature depended on a relationship to something that is other than it, to make it what it is, it would seem to fall short of what natural science assumes about nature. For natural science assumes that it isn’t necessary to consider anything other than nature in order to understand what nature is. (For our present purposes, let’s assume that mathematics is an aspect of nature.) That is, natural science assumes that nature is

involve “negation” insofar as identifying them requires reference to others. So the issue isn’t whether a being has *every one* of its “predicates” by virtue of itself alone; the issue is whether it has *any* of them by virtue of itself alone. What Guyer doesn’t notice is how the interdependence that goes with “negation” is balanced, in Hegel’s discussion, by the equally great importance that Hegel ascribes to “reality” (which leads him to the “something,” the “finite,” and the “infinite,” as I will explain). Interpretations such as Guyer’s and Charles Taylor’s, which emphasize Hegel’s sympathy with Spinoza’s single substance as against the multiplicity of independent individuals that is assumed by Leibniz and by common sense, neglect both the problem of “reality” versus “negation” and the role that Hegel assigns to autonomy/transcendence in solving that problem.

self-sufficient, or, as Hegel puts it, maximally “real.” Whether science is right in assuming this is not the issue, for the moment; the point is simply that Hegelian “reality”, or self-sufficiency, seems to be something that natural science does expect to find, at least in nature as a whole. Probably this kind of self-sufficiency is one of the features of nature that makes everyone inclined to call it “real.” And it seems reasonable to regard this feature as sufficiently important, to say that any part of nature that lacks it will be (in that sense) *less* “real” than nature itself. Nature as a whole, we might think, doesn’t depend on anything else to determine what it is, whereas some of its parts, such as the colors that I mentioned as depending on their relations to other colors to determine what specific color they are, do depend on others for this. In the case of these parts, elements, or aspects of nature, whatever “reality” they have will derive from their relationship to nature (the self-sufficient totality) rather than being their own, in their own right. In which case, it seems reasonable to refer to them as less “real” than nature itself, whose reality is its own, in its own right.

For another example, consider an *attribute*, which apparently can be understood *as* an attribute only in relation to some thing that it’s an attribute *of*, whereas a *thing* (it seems) can be understood as a thing without having in mind a relation to attributes. To be an attribute *is* to belong to a thing, whereas to be a thing is not, as such, to have attributes (even though in practice, of course, a thing must have them). So the thing, as such, seems to be more self-sufficient than the attribute; it is what it is merely by virtue of itself, rather than by virtue of its relation to something else; its reality depends solely on itself, whereas the attribute’s reality depends on something other than itself, and this makes it seem reasonable to say that, to that extent, the thing has more reality, or is more real, than the attribute has or is.

Both with nature as a whole, then, and with a thing as opposed to an attribute, it seems that there is an understandable point to imputing a greater degree of “reality” or self-sufficiency to one item (namely, the thing, or nature as a whole) than to the other (the attribute, or the part of nature that depends on its relation to other parts of nature to make it what it is). Now what Hegel is suggesting is that we can apply this idea of greater and lesser degrees of reality or self-sufficiency not only to these more complex cases, but even to simple *qualities*, as such. A quality that is what it is by virtue of itself, and not by virtue of its relations to other qualities, would be more “real” than one that depends on its relations to others to make it what it is.

The question is, then, how will this reality or self-sufficiency of qualities – if they have it – *relate to* “negation” (the way in which qualities are organized in a conceptual space such that being one particular quality is *not* being the other qualities that are conceptually related to it)? To implement this idea – of the quality’s being what it is simply by virtue of itself rather than by virtue of its relation to other qualities – Hegel introduces the “something” (*Etwas*), which he describes as “the negation of the [first] negation” (WL 5:123/GW 21:103/116): that is, as something that defines itself as being, or seeks to be, *independent of* its relation to others. The first negation determined (that is, specified) the determinate being in terms of what it *is not*; this second negation determines it as *not* being determined in terms of what it is not. But the second “negation,” Hegel says, doesn’t signify a “simple return to the simple beginning, to determinate being as such” (*ibid.*), because the first “negation” was there for a good reason (namely, that qualities really are organized in a conceptual space). Instead, Hegel says, the new being, the “something,” is determinate being that is “*again* equal to itself through supersession [*Aufhebung*] of the distinction”; it is “the simple oneness of determinate being *resulting* from this supersession” (*ibid.*) – a oneness that is achieved by overcoming or superseding, by subsuming in a higher-level unity, the initial, necessary distinction.⁸

Hegel uses a variety of terms for this project of what we might call the something’s “being *itself*,” as opposed to its just being part (a “member,” as one might say) of a conceptually structured universe, but they all refer to the something’s being “self-related in *opposition* to its relation to other” (WL 5:128/GW 21:107,32–33/119) – self-related, that is, in a way that aims somehow to overcome its relation to other, its dependence on others for the determinateness of its quality.⁹

8 Throughout the remainder of his System, Hegel refers to the movement of returning to an initial unity, but on a higher level (or, as he often puts it, with more “concreteness”), as achieving “*reality*.” For example, “substance is . . . the *real* essence, or essence insofar as it is united with being and has entered into actuality” (WL 6:245–246/GW 12:11,34/577). Reality is never merely “given”; rather, it is achieved, and this achievement is the initial unity’s becoming “*again* equal to itself through supersession of the distinction.”

9 Charles Taylor interprets the passages that I’m discussing in the text here as moving from the “unexceptionable point that all reality must be characterized contrastively, that in this sense determinate beings negate others, to the notion of determinate beings in a kind of struggle to maintain themselves in face of others, and hence as ‘negating’ others in an active sense,” where what Taylor has in mind is causal interaction (*Hegel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975], p. 234); and he interprets Hegel’s entire discussion of quality and infinity in these terms. My interpretation absolves Hegel of the illicit move,

Hegel describes the something's "negation of the negation" – its project of overcoming its dependence on others for the determinateness of its quality – as "the beginning of the *subject* . . . only as yet quite indeterminate" (WL 5: 123/GW 21:103,27–28/115; emphasis added). His point is that at whatever stage of development or complexity it is that a being is capable of being "self-related in *opposition* to its relation to other," it is at that stage that the possibility of "being-within-self," or what I just called "being *itself*," enters the picture. What Hegel intends to do here, in first introducing the notion of "being-within-self," is merely to mark off the possibility of this sort of complexity, not to say anything about what kind of beings might have it in practice. However, the fact that "the beginning of the *subject*" is already present here, near the beginning of "Quality" (and not only, for example, in the much later "Subjective Logic," the Doctrine of the Concept), is certainly significant in relation to the relevance that I will be arguing that "Quality" has to issues about freedom, subjectivity, and God.

3.5. "Negativity," or the "Negation of the Negation"

I should say a bit more, before going on, about Hegel's famous notion of the "negation of the negation," which he also calls "absolute negativity," or usually plain "negativity," for short (WL 5:123–124/GW 21:103,35–37/115–116), because it will play a central role in the argument of the whole of the *Science of Logic*. It is obvious from what I said initially about "negation" that it is not equivalent to the relationship of denial that is formalized by modern formal logic as $\neg p$, "the proposition p is not true," or $\neg p(x)$, "the predicate p is not true of x ." Instead, it represents a conceptual relationship between one quality and another: quality x is not – it contrasts with, is different from – quality y . It should not be surprising, then, that the second level of "negation," the "*negation of the negation*," is not simply the denial of the first "negation." Instead, it is a conceptual relationship between the initial conceptual relationship (between two qualities) and a new, as we might call it, "hyperquality." This hyperquality *contrasts with* the quality x (that contrasts with quality y) in that, rather than being determined, in the way that x is, by its

from contrastive to causal "negation," that Taylor suspects him of making, and I think it explains all the passages that he cites. I discuss Taylor's broader interpretation of "Quality" in 3.22. Terry Pinkard raises similar objections to Taylor's treatment of "negation" in his *Hegel's Dialectic. The Explanation of Possibility* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), p. 187 n. 49.

contrast to another quality y (and no doubt to other qualities as well), the hyperquality is determined, somehow, by itself.

What is the significance of relating the hyperquality to the contrast between x and y at all? Why does Hegel refer to its determination – in his formula, “the negation of the negation” – by the same word, “negation,” which he uses to describe the determination of an ordinary quality, and why does it (therefore) seem appropriate to refer to the result as, precisely, a “hyperquality”? This relationship is significant, and this terminology is appropriate, because the relationship determines the hyperquality through a *contrast*, just as first-order “negation” determines the quality x through a contrast. The hyperquality – call it “ X ” – is something that is determined by the fact that it is not determined by what it contrasts with. But being determined in this way is precisely being determined by a contrast (though it’s a second-level contrast, a contrast with all first-order qualities as such, rather than a contrast with any particular first-order quality). That’s why Hegel uses the same word, “negation,” for the second-level relationship.

So Hegel’s analysis and terminology, I suggest, are telling us something quite complex and important. They are telling us that while self-determination is a powerful and central idea, it is an idea that can be fully understood only through its intimate relationship to “other-determination.” They are also telling us that self-determination is understood only when it is understood as both other than and *the same as* other-determination, insofar as it is itself understood through the same relationship of contrast, “negation,” that is characteristic of its opposite, other-determination. In this way, Hegel is registering an important reservation in relation to the idea of the sovereign, self-determining self. He’s not saying, as Nietzsche and post-modernists often seem to say, that this self is an illusion, there is no such thing. But he is saying that the self-determining self must be understood in a way that its theorists often, indeed characteristically, do not understand it: namely, as inseparable from the “other,” the other-determined non-self. (Kant, in particular, is guilty of missing this point, insofar as he implies that the realm or the point of view of self-determination, freedom, and noumena could, in principle, be fully understood – by a divine intelligence, if not by a human one – without reference to its counterpart realm or point of view of other-determination, nature, and phenomena.) When I say that the self-determining self is “inseparable from” the other-determined non-self, I emphatically do not mean that it is “reducible to” the latter. The self-determining self is not reducible to the other-determined non-self,

because the self-determining self is a conceptually necessary step beyond the other-determined non-self. What I do mean is that it is “un-thinkable without” the latter: The self-determining self can only be thought, Hegel maintains, *in the same thought with* the other-determined non-self because the self-determining self is itself conceived by iterating, in the “negation of the negation,” a concept that belongs, initially and characteristically, to the description of the domain of other-determination. What happens here is that the domain of other-determination, in a sense, *goes beyond itself*, rather than being transcended or opposed by something that is simply other than itself. It goes beyond itself in the idea of something that is *other than other-determined*. There is nothing, Hegel implies, that is “*simply* other,” since the idea of otherness (being determined as “other than”) transforms itself, in the way that I just described, into the idea of something that is itself (something that is determined as itself, rather than as “other than”). But neither is there anything that is “*simply itself*,” since the idea of being *itself* is generated by an iteration of the idea of otherness. Otherness penetrates into selfhood – and vice versa.¹⁰ We will discuss these complex and powerful ideas further in connection with true infinity, in which they are spelled out further.

3.6. Finite Being

As a counterpart term to “being-in-itself,” Hegel’s term for the way in which “negativity” is “self-related in *opposition* to its relation to other,” Hegel introduces “being-for-other,” which designates the way in which, as we discussed in 3.4, determinate beings in fact logically depend upon others for the determinateness of their qualities.

Now, however, Hegel introduces a major problem for “being-in-itself.” We need to be able to think about being-in-itself and being-for-other, he suggests, not just as “moments” in the logical struggle between self-determination and other-determination that we have been describing, but also as concrete properties of the determinate being.¹¹ But

10 Shortly after the passage that I have been discussing, Hegel discusses an “other that, taken in its own self, is not the other of something but the other in its own self [*das Andere an ihm selbst*], the other of itself,” where his example is “physical nature,” which is the “other” of “spirit,” which is “the true [*wahrhafte*] something” (WL 5:127/GW 21:106,33–39/118).

11 Hegel says we need to see them as “present in it,” *an ihm* (WL 5:129/GW 21:108,1/120) – or elsewhere, equivalently, as “posited,” *gesetzt* (WL 5:130/GW 21:109/121). Klaus

to be a property is to be, in effect, a determinate quality. And being a determinate quality, according to the preceding analysis, necessarily involves a relationship to others. So being-in-itself, in order to be a property present in the determinate being, will necessarily involve a relationship to others, or being-for-other.¹² But if being-in-itself is just a particular kind of being-for-other, what then is left of its program of being “self-related in *opposition* to its relation to other”?

This might sound like the end of the road for the project of being-in-itself. However, Hegel now describes what seems like a possible way out, which he calls “finitude.” Finitude will not be his ultimate solution to the problem of how something can be in charge of its own quality, because finitude will fail, too; but it is a possible solution, and Hegel considers it for the sake of systematic completeness, en route to his preferred solution, the infinite. The basic thought associated with finitude seems to be that to the extent that the “other” *doesn’t exist*, the something won’t have to be “for” it (have its quality through its relation to it), so that the something’s being-in-itself can be present in it as a concrete property without deteriorating into a mere being-for-other. “In the *limit*, the *non-being-for-other* comes to the fore, the qualitative negation of the other, which is thereby *kept apart from* the something, which is reflected into itself” (WL 5:135–136/GW 21:113,17–20/126; emphasis added). To allow for the possibility that other somethings may in fact exist, to some extent, we must assign this same strategy to all of them: Each will be successfully being-in-itself, having its qualities by virtue of itself, *insofar as* the others are effectively kept apart from it (in the extreme case, insofar as they don’t exist). This proviso will be fulfilled by the somethings’ all being *finit*. To the extent that the somethings’ being is limited, they can be thought of as separated off, as irrelevant to each other. To that extent, each can be “master of its own domain,” such as it is.¹³ I say “such as it is” because (as Hegel immediately comments) this

Brinkmann connects Hegel’s notion of *an ihm Sein*, of “presence in it,” to Aristotle’s notion of actuality as the fulfilment of potentiality (*Aristoteles’ allgemeine und spezielle Metaphysik* [Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1979], p. 226). To speak meaningfully of potentiality, we must think of it not as permanently and solely potential, but as liable to be actualized. To speak meaningfully of “being-in-itself,” we must think of it as being liable to manifest itself externally, and thus constituting a concrete property of the something.

¹² WL 5:134, sentences 1–3/GW 21:112,23–32/124.

¹³ I take Hegel to be saying not just that other beings aren’t here and aren’t now, so they can be ignored. Space and time, as such, do not enter into the Logic. Rather, I take him to be saying that because other beings’ being is limited, it has no “ultimate,” no lasting or final relevance. The paragraph just given gives my interpretation of the following

new way of achieving being-within-self is a double-edged sword, for the something, because it defends the something's being-in-itself only by limiting its *being*; or as Hegel puts it: through the limit, something and other "both *are* and *are not*" (WL 5: 136/GW 21:114,14/127). He puts this even more dramatically when he says that finite things "*are*, but the truth of this being is their *end*. . . . [T]he being as such of finite things is to have the germ of decease as their being-within-self: the hour of their birth is the hour of their death" (WL 5: 139–140/GW 21:116,5–12/129). This is the consequence of the limit, or "non-being," that secures what being (in the sense of being-in-itself) they have.¹⁴

The final point that Hegel makes about this finite something is that although the limit enables the determinate being to exist "beyond,"

sentences, in which Hegel introduces the idea of "limit": "In so far as the being-within-self is the *non-being of the otherness*—an otherness that is contained in the being-within-self but which at the same time has a distinct being of its own—the something is itself the negation, the *ceasing of an other in it*. . . . This other, the being-within-self of the something as negation of the negation, is its *being-in-itself*, and at the same time this supersession is *present in it* as a simple negation—namely, as its negation of the other something external to it. There is a *single* determinateness of both [the something and the other], which on the one hand is identical with the being-within-self of the somethings, as negation of the negation, and on the other hand, since these negations are opposed to one another as other somethings, conjoins and equally disjoins them, as a result of themselves, each negating the other: This determinateness is *limit*" (WL 5: 135/GW 21:113,2–15/125–126; emphasis added). I have found no commentary that focusses on the specific text of this transition. If finitude seems obviously doomed from the start, as a solution to the problem that Hegel is addressing, this is not necessarily an objection to Hegel's procedure. He is simply seeking to be thorough.

- 14 Robert Pippin interprets Hegel's talk of the finite being's inevitable "decease" as meaning that, at this point in the conceptual development, "there is no way conceptually to assign any permanent structure to any thing, and therefore the only consistent overall thought of being at this stage is the thought of the radically unstable, the impermanent, as incapable of maintaining itself as such, and so as always 'passing away'" (*Hegel's Idealism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], pp. 192–193). I think it is more plausible to interpret Hegel's remarks about finitude in the context of the issue—which I have traced through the entire text starting with "Something"—of how something could have its quality by virtue of itself, alone. Pippin's interpretation has Hegel making a rather external, negative point about the epistemological poverty of the categories so far developed, whereas my interpretation has him making a specific, internal point about the nature and content of those categories, a point that, consequently, does more to motivate the detailed development of Hegel's argument in "Determinate Being." In general, I have the impression that Pippin's concern to avoid Taylor-like metaphysical interpretations of the *Logic* (in this chapter of his book, see his comments on pp. 177 and 199), and his consequent attempt to find a purely epistemological argument in the book, may have caused him to underestimate the book's relevance to the philosophy of mind, the will, and freedom. I show in section 3.22 how we don't need to deny the book's ontological substantiveness in order to avoid Taylor's way of interpreting that substantiveness.

apart from, its other, the limit, too, is an other, in relation to the determinate being: The limit is “the middle between the two of them in which they cease . . . as the non-being of each of them it is the other of both” (WL 5: 137/GW 21:114,21–24/127). But this means that in search of the opportunity to be itself, the determinate being has once again become dependent on an other. So that “the something, which is only in its limit, . . . separates itself from itself and *points beyond itself to its non-being, declaring this to be its being and thus passing over into it*” (WL 5: 137–138/GW 21:115,9–11/127; emphasis added). I will explain this conclusion in the next section. It is what Hegel describes at the end of his section as the famous “contradiction of the finite”: that “something . . . posited as the *contradiction* of itself, through which it is directed and forced out of and beyond itself, is the finite” (WL 5: 139/GW 21:116,20–22/129; emphasis altered). Commentators have found it difficult to interpret the “contradiction” that Hegel thinks he has identified here, and some of their explanations of it have contributed to Hegel’s reputation as an advocate of a doctrine that is the exact opposite of common sense. I will try to show that we don’t need to go to such extremes.¹⁵

3.7. The Finite and the Infinite

First, let us ask again: What does the limit in fact *contribute* to the project of enabling something to be itself, by overcoming its relation to other? It may in fact have reduced the significance of the other something by successfully negating it (putting it “beyond” or outside the first something’s concern). But the price of this accomplishment is that it seems to have laid on the first something a different kind of relation to other: its relation to its limit. One consequence, as Hegel notes, is that, since this new other is out of the something’s control, the “thought of the finitude of things brings [a] sadness with it”; and another consequence, resulting from the fact that finitude tends to be taken out of its larger,

15 Paul Guyer’s attempt at interpreting this “contradiction,” in “Hegel, Leibniz and the Contradiction in the Finite,” is one of the most detailed and also (in the extensive use that it makes of Hegel’s possible relationship to Leibniz) one of the most imaginative attempts. However, it does not analyze the passage in which Hegel introduces the concept of limit (see note 13), and it does not follow the problem of being-in-itself from its inception, in the section on “Something,” to its solution in “Infinity,” as I do. As a result, it pictures Hegel’s line of thought as simply opposing common sense (and Leibniz) on the question of the existence of a multiplicity of finite things, rather than as attempting to supersede them.

Logical context and regarded as a simple given, is that "finitude is the most stubborn category of the understanding," the hardest to overcome (WL 5: 140/GW 21:117,14–22/129). In fact, Hegel introduces a new term for the limit when it is perceived as a constraint on the something, as preventing it from being anything but merely finite: he calls it "limitation" (*Schranke*, "limit" is *Grenze*).

So the first, essential aspect of the "contradiction of the finite" is simply this: that when the "limit" was introduced, its point was supposed to be that it would enable the something to have its quality by virtue of itself, but instead of doing that, it has imposed another kind of "being-for-other" on the something – a "being for the limit," so to speak.

However, this failure of the finite – this intensified problem – in fact brings the *solution* – namely, the infinite – into view. Hegel writes: "In order that the limit which is in something as such should be a *limitation*, this something must at the same time in its self *transcend* the limit, it must in its own self [*an ihm selbst*] be related to the limit as to *something which is not*" (WL 5: 143/GW 21:119,17–20/132; emphasis added). This relation to the limit as to something that is not occurs in what Hegel calls the "ought" (*Sollen*): In recognizing a higher vocation than its finite characteristics, the something is related to its limit or its limitation as something that doesn't exist as fully as the something could exist if it pursued that higher vocation. It relates to the limit as standing in the way of its pursuit of this higher vocation; that is why the limit is a "limitation" for it. The experience of having such a higher vocation, in relation to which one's finite nature is a limitation, is the experience of "transcending" (literally: "going beyond") "its own self" (WL 5: 143/GW 21:119,25/132). To perceive oneself as facing a "limitation" is already, Hegel suggests, to go beyond that limitation, insofar as, in order to perceive oneself in this way, one must already have some conception of what it would be like not to be constrained by the limitation. And to have such a conception, Hegel implies, is not to be fully "limited" or finite any longer, because it is already to be half way to actualizing the conception of what it would be like not to be constrained by the limitation.

Hegel makes it clear in his Remark on the Ought that one of the things that his notion of the Ought – of a finite thing's "going beyond its own self" – is meant to capture, is Kant's conception of morality as rational autonomy. "The ought has recently played a great role in philosophy, especially in connection with morality. . . . 'You can, because you ought,' . . . For the ought implies that one is superior to the

limitation.”¹⁶ “Duty is an ought directed against the particular will, against self-seeking desire and capricious interest. . . . The philosophy of Kant and Fichte sets up the ought as the highest point of the resolution of the contradictions of reason” (WL 5: 147–8/GW 21:123,25–6/136). “In the ought the transcendence of finitude, that is, *infinity*, begins” (WL 5: 145/GW 21:121,11/134; emphasis added), to which Hegel then adds in the text itself (subsequent to the Remark) that “in the infinite the spirit . . . rises to its own self, to the light of its thinking, of its universality, of its *freedom*” (WL 5: 150/GW 21:125,7–10/138; emphasis added).¹⁷ Hegel has well-known objections, which he begins to lay out in his Remark on the Ought and which I’ll discuss in 3.9, to Kant’s and Fichte’s view of the ought as the “highest point,” but the reason why the ought comes into Hegel’s discussion at all, here, is that in its way, the ought nevertheless does point to the possibility of a finite thing’s having its quality by virtue of itself by going beyond its finitude, and thus it opens up the possibility of a solution of the problem that the something and finitude could not solve: the problem of how something could have its quality by virtue of itself, rather than by virtue of its relations to other things, and thus could have “reality.” Questioning or abstracting from inclinations and drives, the process that is essential to the moral attitude as Kant pictures it, is precisely a way in which a being can conceive of, and perhaps pursue, a life that is not dictated by its finite limitations – which (as Kant and Hegel agree) are initially alien to it – and can thus be itself, have its quality by virtue of itself. The “ought” is the authority that is exercised by such a conception. What gives it *authority*, in contrast to the mere power that a desire or a drive

16 WL 5: 144/GW 21:121,31–1/133; “You can, because you ought” paraphrases statements of Kant’s in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (translated by T. M. Greene and H. H. Hudson [New York: Harper, 1960]), p. 46 and elsewhere.

17 The intimate connection, in Hegel’s mind, between true infinity and the task of appropriating what is true, while criticizing what is mistaken, in Kantian philosophy is especially evident in his early work, *Faith and Knowledge* (1802), translated by W. Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977); see, for example, pp. 63, 113, 190 (TWA 2: 297, 352, 431). See also *Philosophy of Right* §135: “Knowledge of the will first gained a firm foundation and point of departure in the philosophy of Kant, through the thought of its *infinite* autonomy” (emphasis added); and §133A: “The merit and exalted viewpoint of Kant’s moral philosophy are that it has emphasized this significance of duty.” Here, Hegel repeats his endorsement, in the *Logic*, of the Kantian “ought” (which now appears in the form of “duty”). Of course, his *critique* of the “ought,” in the *Logic*, corresponds to his critique of “morality” in general, in the *Philosophy of Right*. And both are clearly meant to be cases of “supersession,” of *Aufhebung*, in which the *truth* of the preceding stage (the ought, or morality) is preserved through the criticism.

can have, is the fact that, if Hegel's analysis of determinate being and finitude is correct, it is only by pursuing a life that goes beyond its finite limitations that the being can really have its quality by virtue of itself.

It may be surprising to find Hegel talking, in effect, about ethics and free agency, in a context in which, up to this point, he has not referred to human beings or even to living creatures, but has only been talking about determinate "qualities" and about "finite" beings. (I pointed out a corresponding surprise in one of Hegel's "Remarks" on being, nothing, and becoming, in 3.3.) Hegel isn't suddenly "changing the subject" from quality and finitude to the will and ethics. Rather, he is implying that in connection with phenomena such as the will and ethics, and the beings that are capable of them, we find qualities that can in fact be what they are by virtue of themselves, rather than by virtue of their relations to other beings. Thus, a being that is capable of going beyond its finite quality by seeking a higher authority by which to be guided – a "self-transcending" being – solves the problem that "something" and finite being were unable to solve: It has its quality by virtue of itself, and thus has the "reality" or "being-in-itself" that "something" and finite being failed to have. It avoids the trap that the something's being-in-itself fell into – of turning out to be simply another being-for-other – because, being infinite, self-transcendence isn't "present in" the something in the same way that an ordinary quality is. And because self-transcendence is the being's own *self-transcendence*, it avoids finite being's problem that its "limit" turns out to be just another "other" for it. By going beyond its finite qualities, the self-transcending being is in charge of whatever qualities it will now have: It has them by virtue of itself rather than by virtue of its relations to others.¹⁸

18 Note that I have said only that freedom of the kind that Kant analyzes *can* solve the problem that something and finitude could not solve; I have not said that *only* Kantian freedom can solve it. Hegel, in fact, mentions other things besides moral agents that "go beyond themselves": stones that interact with acids, plants that grow and make seeds, and sentient creatures that seek to overcome hunger, are all described by him as responding to an "ought" of their own, thus going beyond finitude and (apparently) becoming more nearly self-determining (WL 5: 145–6/GW 21:121–122/134–5). Like Aristotle in the *De Anima*, Hegel emphasizes the affinities between human, rational selfhood and sub-human forms of self-organization, and in this way, also, reduces the sharp dualism of Kant's conception of rational functioning. In doing this, of course, Hegel and Aristotle do not *eliminate* selfhood, as many modern "naturalisms" do; rather, they find it in a broader range of phenomena than Kant finds it in. (Indeed, to begin with they find it, precisely, in *phenomena*! – as Kant does not.) In this passage, Hegel anticipates patterns that he will develop in more detail in the Idea (see Chapter 5) and especially in his *Philosophy of Nature* (Chapter 6).

What qualities *will* the self-transcending being have? This, of course, is the great question, to which most of the rest of Hegel's philosophical system, both in the *Logic* and in the rest of the *Encyclopedia* and the *Philosophy of Right*, is – directly or indirectly – devoted.¹⁹ The goal of the present part of Hegel's analysis is simply to show that this self-transcendence need not create a problematic dualism, of the sort that it led to in Kant. I will say more in the next section about how it shows this.

3.8. Infinity, Freedom, and Nature

When Hegel says that freedom's "infinity" "transcends" finite qualities, he is basically just following Kant, and thus he contradicts common sense no more than Kant does. No doubt it is Hegel's talk of the finite's "contradicting" itself that gives rise to the suspicion that he is rejecting common sense. But if it is understood in the way that I have been suggesting we should understand it, that talk is not particularly mysterious. It is simply his way of describing the problem that it seems that determinate being's quality should be what it is by virtue of itself – it seems as though determinate being's quality should have "reality" – but it turns out that when we try to articulate that reality as "something" or as finite being, it fails to be something that the being has by virtue of itself, and in that sense, it fails to be "real." Only the quality of a *self-transcending* being, of the kind that we have just been discussing, can be real in that way.

But the important implication of all of this, in connection with our initial issue of the relation between freedom and nature, is that *there is no such contrast between ordinary being* (as in the being of nature), *and self-transcending freedom, as Kant supposed there was*. Through the argument that we have been examining, Hegel has shown that nature and freedom are not opposed, in the way that Kant supposes they are, because any

19 Section 7 concludes my reply to Guyer's critical account of Hegel's argument for the contradiction of the finite, in "Hegel, Leibniz and the Contradiction in the Finite," in which Guyer unfortunately examines neither the sections on "Quality" and "Something" in which Hegel spells out the problem that "Finitude" will try to address, nor the sections on "Limitation and the Ought" and "Infinity" that help us to understand Hegel's descriptions of the contradiction of the finite by understanding what they are pointing towards – understanding, in particular, that they are *not* pointing towards a mere substance-monism, as Guyer seems to think. For more comments on the substance-monism interpretation, see Section 3.22 below.

realm of being whatever must “pass over,” if it is to contain “reality,” into the infinite, and thus into a realm of something very much like what Kant calls freedom. That is, Hegel has shown that no realm of being is fully intelligible, even as a realm merely of *being*, if we don't impute to it (at least) an implicit reference to freedom.²⁰

The crux of Hegel's argument for this dramatic thesis, clearly, is the problematicness of determinate being's necessary reliance on negation – on the quality of other determinate beings – to determine its own quality. Hegel develops this problematicness into the interpretation of “limit” as “limitation,” and into the notion of the something as going beyond itself, in the infinite. The problematicness itself is due to the conflict between determinate being's dependence on others, for its determinate quality, and quality's need to be something that exists, initially, by virtue of itself, or by virtue of the being that has it, rather than by virtue of relations between that being and other beings. It could be a surprise to those who take Hegel to have a low opinion of particulars, as such, that he places such stress, in this argument, on the intuition that something's specific quality should be “its own business” (that it should be a “being-within-self”: something that it has by virtue of itself). I take this to be a genuine agreement, on his part, with unsophisticated “common sense” – though of course the conclusions that he draws from it hardly coincide with that sort of common sense. The distinctive characteristic of his argument is that he combines this agreement, this emphasis on “being-within-self,” with his account of “negation,” which describes determinate beings as so intimately involved with one another that infinity turns out to be the only way to reassert the possibility that some of them might successfully have their qualities by virtue of themselves. Thus the duality of “being-within-self,” or being what one is by virtue of oneself, on the one hand, and negation, or logical involvement with others, on the other hand, generates the connection that Hegel is suggesting between merely being a specific quality (by virtue of oneself) and being *free*: the connection being that *freedom*, rather than being something that sets itself *against* being in the

20 Here I need to repeat the proviso that I made in note 18: that for Hegel, a greater variety of things are capable of some kind of self-transcendence or freedom than Kant imagines are capable of it. But it is certainly still true, for Hegel, that human freedom is more complete, more fully developed, than the self-transcendence that is achieved by a stone, a plant, or a non-human sentient creature. Thus, human freedom is necessarily included in whatever Hegel says about the role of self-transcendence (the “Ought,” and infinity) in solving the problem of how a being can have its quality by virtue of itself.

sense of quality and thus also (for example) in the sense of “nature,” *is simply the fullest, most successful form of being*—the only being that succeeds in being what it is by virtue of itself. That is, rather than understanding nature as the paradigm of being and (at the same time) as the simple *absence* of freedom, as is commonly done and is preeminently done by Kant, Hegel suggests that we should understand nature as embodying the *project* of being (understood as involving being what one is by virtue of oneself) which is fully *carried out* only in those parts of nature—above all, human beings—that achieve freedom. Rather than being opposed to (“normal”) being, then, freedom should be understood as the full flowering of being: the only way in which being fully *is*.

This, then, is how Hegel responds to the problem that led Kant to divide reality into two realms or standpoints neither of which can (apparently) be understood from within the other. Kant took nature to be a realm of finite, causally determined qualities such as those that he calls “inclinations,” and he therefore thought that freedom, which as he understood it involves a capacity for unlimited (as Hegel would say, “infinite”) rational questioning, could only be located in a realm or from a standpoint that is radically distinct from that of nature. Hegel replies, through the argument that we have been studying, that finite qualities such as inclinations (and the other finite natural qualities that are thought to cause us to have those inclinations) are not fully real, because they aren’t what they are by virtue of themselves, but only by virtue of their relations to other things. Whereas, on the other hand, infinite rational questioning or freedom—the ability to respond to an “ought”—is whatever it is by virtue of itself. But for something to be what it is by virtue of itself was an essential aspect of determinate being itself, from the beginning of Hegel’s analysis of it. Hegel referred to it as the determinate being’s “reality” or its “being-within-self.” So what an “infinite” being achieves is what every being was *supposed* to achieve, but what—as Hegel’s analysis of the something and its other, and of finitude, showed—no non-infinite being *does* achieve. This is how free beings are the fullest, most successful, or—briefly—the most *real* kind of being. As Hegel writes in summing up his idea of infinity, “It is not the *finite* which is the real, but the *infinite*” (WL 5: 164/GW 21:136,9–10/149; emphasis added). But what this means for Kant’s original problem is that the realm of natural *determinism*, which Kant sets up as separate from and independent of the realm of freedom, is, by comparison with the latter realm, *less* (successful in being) *real*. Therefore, the problem of reconciling natural determinism with freedom—taking these as two

competing supposed *realities* – is a problem that does not arise in the first place. The realm of nature is not real in the same way that the realm of freedom is real; in the competition between these two supposed realities, the realm of freedom wins and nature loses. So there is no need to set them up as parallel realities or equally valid standpoints.

This should also explain why I said that Hegel is saying that no realm of being is fully intelligible, even as a realm merely of *being*, if we don't impute to it (at least) an implicit reference to freedom. No doubt there could "be" a world or a universe that contained no free beings. But for the being of this universe to be fully intelligible, as "reality," it must be understood as pointing to the possibility of such beings – which, when and if they appear, will render the being of that universe more complete than it is in their absence. According to Hegel's argument, "mere being," containing no such reference to freedom, is (comparatively) incomplete and unreal.

Lest readers should conclude that Hegel simply denies *any* reality to finite beings, I must immediately add that Hegel is also going to insist that *infinity* does not have *its* reality independently of finite being – that true infinity "is only as a transcending of the finite" (WL 5:160/GW 21:133,36–37/145–146) – so that however unreal finite being may be when *taken by itself*, it is nevertheless an indispensable *aspect* of the ultimate reality. I will explain this relationship in the next section.

3.9. Spurious Infinity and True Infinity

Hegel spells out the contrast between an interpretation of freedom (like Kant's) that opposes it to finite being (and nature), and one that instead interprets freedom as the fullest flowering of being (and nature), in his immediately following discussion of the difference between what he calls "spurious" (*schlechte*) infinity and what he calls "true" infinity – that is, between an infinity that is simply set over against what is finite, and an infinity that instead is understood as the finite's surpassing of itself.

Hegel points out that if we take infinity to be something that is simply opposed to finite things, we get the paradoxical result that infinity is itself finite: The finite things that are opposed to it, constitute a *limit* to it, and thus make it finite. This kind of "infinity" is, of course, the one that Hegel calls "spurious": It doesn't really succeed in being infinite. The absence of any positive relationship between this infinity and finite things also means that, when it is viewed from the point of view of the finite thing that seeks to measure up to it, we get the endless

“progress to infinity” – “and so on to infinity” (WL 5:155/GW 21:129, 8/142), for which the infinite is a perpetual “beyond” (WL 5:156/GW 21:130, 6/142).

One instance of this infinite progression to which Hegel objects especially strongly is Kant’s postulate of immortality, in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (Ak. 121–4), which Kant introduced in order to give the individual soul unlimited time in which to improve towards its (finitely unreachable) goal of perfect moral goodness. Hegel views this as a denial of finitude, which fails to *transcend* finitude, because even with infinite time, it’s unclear how a mixed creature of reason and inclinations, such as we are, can be expected to bootstrap itself up to pure rational goodness (see PhG 3:458–459/§623–624).

Understood as they are by the spurious infinity, the finite and the infinite stand face to face with each other, connected at most by the finite’s endless striving to measure up to the infinite. This is, in general, the relationship between Kant’s two “realms,” the phenomenal and the noumenal – the dualism that I have suggested Hegel is trying to overcome. If infinity related to the finite in this way, that dualism would clearly not have been overcome. But Hegel has in mind a different conception of infinity and thus a different conception of the relationship between the finite and the infinite. “True” infinity, as Hegel explains it, and as I will now lay out, is reached by superseding both the “finite” (as it is understood in the light of the “spurious” infinite) and the spurious infinite itself, in such a way that they cease to be simply opposed to each other.

1. The *finite* is superseded precisely in the way that we have analyzed in 3.4 and 3.6. Hegel sums up the argument with his statement that “finitude is only as a transcending of itself” (WL 5: 160/GW 21:133,34/145). Finite qualities can be what they are by virtue of themselves, rather than being defined by their relation to others, only insofar as they go beyond their finitude. To the extent, then, that a quality fails – as it does at every moment of the “progress to infinity” – to transcend itself, to go beyond its finitude, it fails to be. (More precisely, I suggest: It fails to be “fully.” It is, but it isn’t real: It fails to be what it is by virtue of itself.) So finitude must be superseded, in order to be real.
2. The *spurious infinite*, on the other hand, is superseded by the observation that

infinity is only as a transcending of the finite; it therefore essentially contains its other and is, consequently, in its own self the other of

itself. The finite is not superseded by the infinite as by a power existing outside it; on the contrary, its infinity consists in superseding its own self. (WL 5: 160/GW 21:133,36–2/145–146)

Since an “infinity” that is over against and flatly opposed to the finite is limited by the finite and thus fails to be infinite, true infinity must include the finite by being the finite’s superseding of itself. To the extent that the finite transcends itself, the finite *is*, and to the extent that the finite transcends itself, *infinity* is. Rather than *being*, on the one hand, and arriving (or, in fact, not arriving) at the goal of pure freedom (and goodness), on the other, the finite something constantly comes (fully) *into* being *by* creating pure freedom and goodness, by transcending itself. Both the finite and the infinite come (fully) into being through, and thus they both *are*, the same process. Though infinity transcends, goes beyond, the finite, it does so not by replacing the finite with something totally different, something entirely “beyond” the finite, but by being the self-transcendence *of the finite itself*. The true infinite, the true “beyond,” is *in* the finite rather than opposed to or simply “beyond” it.²¹

21 In his detailed critique (in his *Sein und Schein. Die kritische Funktion der Hegelschen Logik* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980]) of Hegel’s argument for true infinity, Michael Theunissen raises four main objections: (1) Hegel’s statement that the finite “disappears” in the infinite, can’t be reconciled with his immediately prior statement that the infinite is the finite’s “affirmative determination” (WL 5:150/GW 21:125,34–37/138), so this transition involves no genuine “return to self” (Theunissen, p. 281; cp. p. 293). (2) From being, initially, a “goal,” in Hegel’s discussion, infinity becomes a mere “process” (Theunissen, p. 278). (3) Theunissen thinks that Hegel presents the “understanding” as achieving a self-discovery, in his argument, which “reason” transforms into a mere “eternal recurrence of the same” (Theunissen, p. 295). (4) Theunissen regards Hegel’s image, for true infinity, of the *circle* (as opposed to the linear “spurious infinity”) (WL 5:164/GW 21:136,2/149), as implying this same eternal recurrence (the “always-being” of this “motion back into itself” [Theunissen, p. 297]), an “unproductive rotation” (Theunissen, p. 296), rather than the true “presence” that Hegel claims for true infinity (WL 5:164/GW 21:136,25/149). In (1), Theunissen seems to overlook Hegel’s argument that the finite can achieve *reality* only by going beyond itself. The finite “disappears” in the sense that its pretence of independent reality is abandoned, but it is “affirmatively determined” in the infinite insofar as the infinite *is* this self-supersession of (and achievement of reality by) the finite. (2) Hegel certainly does identify true infinity as a process, but Theunissen doesn’t make it clear why it should remain a “goal,” in a sense that’s not compatible with its being a process, as well. (3) I don’t see where Theunissen finds this contrast between the understanding and reason, in Hegel’s presentation, or how reason does what Theunissen says it does. (Perhaps his suggestion, here, depends upon what he says in [1], to which I have replied.) As for (4), I take it that the circle can symbolize presence insofar as, unlike an infinite line, it can be fully surveyed and taken in at a glance. Theunissen doesn’t explain why it must, instead, be understood in the Nietzschean way, as a frustrating recurrence of the same.

Within his discussion of the two versions of infinity, Hegel refers to Kant only negatively, as promoting the spurious infinity's frustrating "progress to infinity." Viewed in a larger perspective, however, what Hegel sketches here as a way of avoiding that frustration is also – and is surely intended by him as – a way of solving the problem of how to understand the relation between freedom and nature (which Kant bequeathed to us in the form of his two "worlds" or two "standpoints"), and thus how to preserve what is *true* and irreplaceable in Kant's conception of freedom. I explained in 3.8 how Hegel's account of the "contradictory" nature of determinate being and of finitude enables him to describe infinite freedom not as something merely opposed to finite being, but rather as finally successfully carrying out the project, implicit in determinate and finite being, of being's having its qualities by virtue of itself. The true infinity is simply the version of infinity that recognizes that this is what infinity is about – that because infinity "*is* only as a transcending of the finite," it is not simply opposed to the finite, but rather is intimately connected to it. This, of course, is what Hegel wants us to understand about the relation between *freedom and nature*, as well: that freedom is not simply opposed to nature, but rather it fulfils a project that is implicit, but unfulfilled, in nature itself (the project of being's having its qualities by virtue of itself), so that believing in the reality of freedom does not diminish the importance of nature in any way. Nor does believing in the importance of nature diminish the reality of freedom. Each exists by virtue of the other; they both come (fully) into being through, and thus they both *are*, the same process.

The quandary that Kant left us in, in which freedom pertains to a world or a point of view that seems to be unintelligible from the world or the point of view of nature (and the reverse, of course, is also the case), is thus resolved, but without eliminating the essential features either of nature or of freedom, as Kant understands them. (That is, of freedom in sense [iii], as I defined it in the Introduction to this chapter.) Hegel does not try to persuade us to be satisfied with our finite, more or less natural, desires or character traits, as the substance of our selfhood, as David Hume does. Nor does he try to persuade us that those finite features are negligible or false, by comparison with the true reality of infinite freedom, as Kant and Plato (on one familiar interpretation of each of them) try to persuade us. Instead, Hegel shows us that the *reality* of those finite features is intimately (if only implicitly) connected to the

reality of infinite freedom, and vice versa, as long as both are seen in the context of the question of how a being can have its quality by virtue of itself.²²

3.10. Empiricism, Dualism, and True Infinity

With regard to empiricism or naturalism – that is, with regard to views like David Hume's – Hegel *endorses* what he calls their "great principle, that what is true must be in actuality and must be there for our perception" (EL §38R). "Philosophy," Hegel says, "like empiricism, is cognizant only of what *is*," and he directly contrasts this "what *is*" with "that which only *ought* to be, and for that reason *is not there*" (ibid.). This is his agreement with empiricism's and naturalism's rejection of Kant's dualism, which Hegel and empiricism/naturalism oppose with the principle that there can only be one primary "actuality" – that a *duality* of actualities, as in the two Kantian worlds or standpoints, is unintelligible and therefore unreal. However, Hegel does not conclude from this great empiricist/naturalist principle that there is no truth whatever in the "ought" – that "what *is*" is simply facts about nature, or subjective experiences, as such. What is *true* in the "ought" is that "in the ought, the transcendence of finitude – that is, *infinity* – begins"

22 Søren Kierkegaard writes: "The bad infinite is the [Hegelian] Method's hereditary enemy; it is the Kobold that moves whenever a transition is about to take place, and prevents it from taking place. The bad infinite is infinitely tenacious of life; it can be vanquished only by a breach of continuity, a qualitative leap. But then it is all over with the Method, the facile nimbleness of its immanence, and the necessity of the transition" (*Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, translated by David F. Swenson [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941], p. 302; compare p. 103). Kierkegaard does not address Hegel's argument – which is supposed to establish the necessity of the transition to true infinity – that the "bad infinite" *fails to be infinite* because it is limited by the finite, to which it is opposed. This is an *internal* critique of the "bad infinite" (not an intrusion, that is, by Hegel's supposed "Method"), so anyone who proposes to criticize Hegel's critique of the bad infinite needs to address it. (Nor does Kierkegaard show any sign of recognizing the role that Hegel has argued that infinity needs to play, in achieving the "reality" of determinate being – which is what makes it vital for philosophy to identify an "infinity" that *succeeds* in being infinite.) These limitations of Kierkegaard's understanding of Hegel allow him to have great fun describing the term "bad infinity" (*schlechte Unendlichkeit*) as a stick that Hegel cherishes because he can browbeat potential critics with it (p. 302). For a detailed response to Adolf Trendelenburg's critique of Hegel's argument to true infinity, which was one of Kierkegaard's main sources of philosophical inspiration in his well-known critique of Hegel, see Josef Schmidt, *Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik und ihre Kritik durch Adolf Trendelenburg* (Munich: Johannes Berchman, 1977), pp. 123–135.

(WL 5: 145/GW 21:121,11–12/134; emphasis added), and this infinity is indispensable because no finite thing is what it is by virtue of itself, and thus no finite thing has reality. This latter argument, the argument of “Quality,” which empiricism and naturalism do not appreciate, shows what the “ought” has to contribute: why it enters into the dialectic at all.

Hegel’s goal, therefore, is to explain how infinity (the *truth* of the “ought”) can “be in actuality and be there for our perception” – how it need not take the form of a second, separate actuality. He does this by explaining that since such a second, separate actuality would in any case be *finite*, as a result of its opposition to the first actuality, true infinity can only be the finite’s transcendence of itself: “infinity is only as a transcending of the finite,” so that the finite’s “infinity consists in superseding its own self” (WL 5:160/GW 21:133,33–2/145–146). The result is that “the infinite determinacy which reason seeks [because only the infinite is real] is *in the world* [it is in finite things and perceptions], though it is there in a sensible, singular shape, and not in its truth” (EL §38A; emphasis added). The infinite reality, the “truth,” of those finite things and perceptions is *their own* self-transcendence, rather than something opposed to and separate from them. Thus we can have infinity, and the reality that depends upon it, without giving up reality’s (actuality’s, the world’s) intelligible unity. We can have the infinite, self-determining reality that is implicit in Kantian *autonomy* without giving up the unity – on which empiricism and naturalism correctly insist – of “what *is*.” What is true in Kant’s noumenal “world” is preserved by the principle that “finitude is only as a transcending of itself” (WL 5:160/GW 21:133,34/145), and what is true in Kant’s phenomenal “world” is preserved by the principle that “infinity is only as a transcending of the finite” (WL 5:160/GW 21:133,36–37/145–146). What is true in empiricism and naturalism, on the other hand, is preserved by the fact that there is only one fundamental process, one “actuality,” here – namely, the true infinite, which is the self-transcendence of the finite. What is *abandoned*, on Kant’s side, is the assumption (embodied in the “spurious infinity”) that finitude and infinitude, as polar opposites, cannot and must not include one another, so they must inhabit separate “worlds” or “points of view.” What is abandoned on the side of empiricism and naturalism are the assumptions that the finite is unproblematically real, and that nothing infinite (transcendent) can be “in the world” in any way – that is, the same “spurious infinity” assumption that

Kant makes, that the finite cannot include the infinite and the infinite cannot include the finite.²³

Thus by challenging, and projecting an alternative to, the “spurious infinity,” Hegel captures what seems to be true both in Kantian transcendentalism and in the empiricism and naturalism that are the main sources of opposition in modern philosophy to Kantian transcendentalism. It is no wonder, then, that in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel describes true infinity as “the fundamental concept of philosophy” (EL §96R).

3.11. How Hegel's Position Relates to “Compatibilism” and “Incompatibilism”

Hegel makes it quite clear that his account of freedom differs in an important way from Kant's account of it, insofar as he objects to Kant's dualism of phenomena and noumena or appearances and things-in-themselves, and readers who approach Hegel from the point of view of Anglo-American philosophy sometimes assume that if Hegel does not accept Kant's conception of the status of freedom – which is often taken as a paradigmatic “*incompatibilist*” account, due to its assumption that freedom is not directly compatible with the determinism that Kant and many others ascribe to nature – then Hegel must be essentially in agreement with the “*compatibilist*” view of freedom or responsible action that is characteristic of the British empiricist tradition, beginning with Hobbes and Hume. As I explained in 2.4, empiricist compatibilism asserts that it is reasonable to hold a person responsible for her actions even if those actions were fully determined by natural laws and prior states of the world, as long as the chain of determining causes operated through her *character*, and not through distorting media such as outright coercion or mental illness. This is thought to be sufficient to make the action “her own,” and thus one that she is responsible for.²⁴

23 If the reader hears echoes, in my talk of the finite's including the infinite and the infinite's including the finite, of Hegel's famous or infamous account of “contradiction,” in the Doctrine of Essence, that is not at all accidental. Hegel in fact says that “the infinite . . . is *contradiction* as displayed in the sphere of being” (WL 6:75/GW 11:287,30–31/440; emphasis added). I will explore this connection in Chapter 4.

24 See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 21, paragraphs 1–4; David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Part III, sections 1 and 2, and *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1902), pp. 80–103. An influential statement of substantially the same position is A. J. Ayer, “Freedom and Necessity,” in his *Philosophical Essays* (London) Macmillan,

As I explained earlier, however, though Hegel rejects Kant's "two-worlds" approach, he doesn't accept empiricism's account of the nature of the "one" reality. His argument that the finite, as such, is unreal, would be fatal to that account. Nor does Hegel accept empiricism's identification of the person's will (the locus of responsibility) with certain character traits; on the contrary, Hegel (like Kant) thinks it's crucial that a person can question every character trait, like every desire, to determine its rational credentials, its "authority" (see Chapter 2), so that the ultimate locus of responsibility for Hegel (as for Kant) is this capacity for questioning, and the "transcendence," the "going-beyond" that it makes possible.²⁵ This is something that only a reality that embodies "*infinity*" can provide for. So by virtue of its differing conceptions both of the one reality and of the will, Hegel's "compatibilism" – if we choose to call it that – is quite different from Hobbes's and Hume's, and our "taxonomy" of positions on the nature of freedom and the will needs to be more complex than the usual Anglo-American taxonomy. As I said earlier, Hegel aims to capture what is true *both* in Kant's position (namely, the idea that the will must be capable of going beyond finite inclinations) *and* in the empiricist or naturalist position (namely, the idea that reality cannot be fundamentally and irreducibly bifurcated). That being the case, it is no surprise that a taxonomy that focusses only on the two views that Hegel seeks to combine and go beyond, will not accurately reflect what he's up to.

3.12. True Infinity, "Striving," and "Actuality"

Some readers who focus on Hegel's highly visible objections to Kant's postulate of immortality and to the forever unfulfilled "striving" to which that postulate seems to point have strong objections to the "true" infinity that Hegel advocates. They reply that there is nothing inherently objectionable in the idea of striving for something ultimate that one cannot attain. Michael Inwood, for example, writes that "Hegel (like Aristotle) found it hard to accept that much valuable activity consists in striving for goals, which, once attained, are less valuable than the striving: Climbers enjoy trying to reach the top of mountains more

1954), pp. 271–284. It is Ayer who adds the qualification about mental illness (via the example of kleptomania).

25 See note 21 in Section 2.4 for citations of recent writers about freedom and responsibility who agree with Hegel in rejecting both incompatibilism and the empiricist conception of volition.

than they enjoy *being* at the top of them; we enjoy research and discovery more than the contemplation of our results, etc.”²⁶ And Søren Kierkegaard asserts, against Hegel's conceptions of true infinity and actuality, that “the ideal of a persistent striving is the only view of life that does not carry with it an inevitable disillusionment” (which will ensue when “systematic finality” reveals itself as less than fully satisfying).²⁷

To begin with Inwood: Hegel's point is, first, that if the task is, precisely, to go beyond finitude – to *accomplish* the presence of the infinite (of being-in-itself) in the finite – then finite ‘steps in that direction’ don't even *begin* to do this. If there was no hope of our actually *reaching* the top of the mountain, or of our research leading to actual *results*, our striving in those areas would cease to be intelligible. And second, a better explanation of the satisfaction that we find in striving for goals that we may not be able to attain could be that the striving itself *is* the accomplishment – that this activity is itself, in an important respect, our goal. (As Aristotle says, “the end is sometimes an activity, sometimes a product beyond the activity” [*Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a4], and virtue, in his view, is an example of the first kind, not the second.) If there really *is* striving, of this sort, in the world – as there clearly is, if our whole discussion has any point at all – then the infinite *is*, in fact, *present* in the finite. The presence of striving that truly is aimed at an infinite goal, is, in effect, the presence of that goal – in (and at the same time going beyond) the finite. It is present only by virtue of our efforts, so the Hegel/Aristotle view in no way suggests that we can relax and merely “contemplate our results.” But it *is present*, and Kant's and Inwood's mistake is that they don't recognize – their intellectual structures don't allow them to recognize – this kind of presence.

This is also the answer to Kierkegaard's prediction of “disillusionment”: There is no need to fear disillusionment about the presence of our efforts, and thus of the infinite itself, in our world. Our efforts, and thus the ideal that they pursue, are not only an ideal, they are also actual; and insofar as they are actual, the infinite is actual. Kierkegaard views Hegel's system as an intellectual construction, remote from lived experience. But the notion of the finite's going beyond itself, on which Hegel relies throughout his system, is very much a description of lived

26 Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 210–211. The use of the term “striving” to designate the relationship between the finite and the infinite stems from J. G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge* (1794–5), translated by Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 231; SW 1:261.

27 Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, translated by David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 110.

experience, of real effort and real activity, and it's precisely our experience both of the authority of ethics (epitomized in our sense that there is an "ought," to which we can be more or less attentive) and of questioning about what ethics requires (which we find is not reducible to the simple satisfaction of particular finite desires or opinions), that Hegel relies on to convince us of this. (So that Kierkegaard's other favorite complaint, that Hegel's system lacks an "ethics," is equally poorly aimed. Hegel's system *is* an "ethics," to its very roots.)

Rather than rejecting "striving" in favor of "contemplation," then, what Hegel does is reinterpret striving as implying the effective presence of its goal, in reality: Striving (by finite beings) becomes the effective presence of the infinity that it aims at, so that reality embodies finitude by being finitude's self-transcendence (the effective presence of the infinite in it), rather than being merely finitude and its mere striving, or merely the transcendent, or merely the two of them, somehow side-by-side.

The effective presence of the infinite in the finite constitutes what Hegel later will call "Actuality," which he will describe as "rational" (in his famous saying, referred to in 3.1). The explanation that I just gave of how this effective presence *is* our "striving," and thus doesn't eliminate the need for human effort, also explains why the "rationality of the actual" does not eliminate the need for improving existing human institutions. To the extent that those institutions are perverse or merely random, they don't embody human striving for the good and they aren't what Hegel calls "actual." (I'll explain this in more detail in 4.15 and 5.8.)

True infinity is also the answer to the issue that I posed in 2.2 about whether the rationalism that Hegel shares with Kant involves what amounts to "slavery" for the inclinations, and for the "particular" in general – the slavery that the young Hegel accused Kant's rationalism of involving, in his ironical comparison (in "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate") between the "Shaman of the Tungus" and "the man who listens to his own command of duty" and is "his own slave." Insofar as the inclinations, and the "particular" in general, are finite, Hegel's argument shows that they are "unreal." This does not by any means imply, however, that they can simply be "ruled" (or "enslaved"). For according to true infinity, the infinite "*is* only as a transcending of the finite" (WL 5:160/GW 21:133,36–37/145–146), so that we must be able to trace, in the "inclinations" and the "particular" (indeed, in nature), the way in which they transcend themselves. Hegel does this in great detail in his "Doctrine of the Concept," which I will discuss in Chapter 5, and

his *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Spirit*, which I will discuss in Chapter 6.

3.13. True Infinity and the "Negation of the Negation"

Having spelled out (in 3.8–3.12) the way in which true infinity appears to solve the problem of the relation between freedom (in the demanding, Kantian/Hegelian sense of the word) and being or nature, let us go back for a moment to the root of infinity and freedom, for Hegel, which is in the idea of negativity, or the negation of the negation (discussed in 3.5), and see how true infinity articulates what was implicit in that earlier distinctively Hegelian move. As I explained, Hegel's "negation of the negation," which he presents as an account of how determinate being goes beyond its determination by what is other than it and achieves "being-within-self" or, in effect, self-determination, implies that self-determination is properly understood only when it is understood as both other than and *the same as* other-determination, insofar as in the second negation, the "*negation of the negation*," self-determination is itself understood through the same relationship of contrast, or "negation," that is characteristic of its opposite, other-determination. Thus the very way in which Hegel first introduces the idea of the self-determining subject ("the beginning of the subject" [WL 5:123/GW 21:103,27/115]) implies major reservations about the notion of a sovereignly independent self that has nothing to do with what is other than it. Hegel doesn't say, as Nietzsche and post-modernists often seem to say, "This 'self' is a mere illusion! There is no such thing!" Rather, he says: Selfhood is inseparable from unselfhood, self-determination from other-determination – where we must note well the difference between "*reducible to*," which Hegel certainly does not assert, and "inseparable from," which he does assert. The exact nature of that inseparability is what Hegel is trying to spell out for us.

Now what happened in "Finitude," which immediately follows the section that introduces this fundamental idea of "negativity," is that Hegel presented a possible way of insulating each "something" from the others, thus allowing it to be self-determining – that way being the "limit," the boundary between them. When it became clear that the limit was, in effect, a new "other," still preventing self-determination, Hegel moved to the idea of the something's going beyond itself, through the ought and (Kantian) freedom, which presented the opposite problem that the finite that was "gone beyond" constituted yet another limit

and “other.” Here, Hegel showed how Kant’s conception of freedom finitizes and thus destroys itself by setting itself in sheer opposition to finitude and other-determination. The solution, as we have seen, was to spell out an identity-in-difference between the finite and the infinite, each as achieving its reality through the other. But what this identity-in-difference does is simply to show, in a more articulated way, how selfhood and otherness, self-determination and other-determination, are inseparable. The finite products of other-determination achieve reality only insofar as they go beyond themselves in the manner of self-determining Kantian autonomy; but at the same time, that autonomy achieves reality only by being the self-transcendence of the finite products of other-determination. Selfhood and self-determination are consistently *thinkable* only as categorially inseparable, in this way, from unselfhood and other-determination. Which is precisely the same point that I just described him as already making through the notion of the negation of the negation (“negativity”).

Thus there is no conflict, in principle, between Hegel’s description of true infinity, in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, as “the fundamental concept [*der Grundbegriff*] of philosophy” (EL §96R), and his description of “negativity,” in the first edition of the *Science of Logic*, as “the abstract foundation [*Grundlage*] of all philosophical ideas and of speculative thought in general” (GW 11:77,30–32). These are simply – as the word, “abstract,” in the second quotation, indicates – more and less worked-out, more and less “concrete” versions of the same thing.

Indeed, it seems pretty clear that this same idea also constitutes the structure of “being with oneself in one’s other” or “coming to oneself in one’s other” that Hegel identified, in a lecture, with true infinity (EL 8:199/149, §94A), and in numerous places with freedom (PR 7:57, §7A; cp. EG 10:34–36, §346A). The “oneself” part is the finite thing’s success in being what it is by virtue of itself, rather than by virtue of its relation to others, by going beyond its finitude in the manner suggested by the “ought” and Kantian freedom. But this “oneself” is “*in its other*” in that it is the finite thing – rather than a “power existing *outside*” the finite thing, as in the spurious infinity – that accomplishes this going-beyond. The essence of freedom and of true infinity is this non-dualistic “going-beyond”: the finite’s self-transcendence in (or into) itself rather than into or by means of something other than itself.

If we have a reasonable understanding of this idea, now, we are in a position to draw together, in a preliminary way, quite a lot of Hegel’s mature thinking. Always remembering that more developed ideas are,

in Hegel's view, "truer," so we are still only at the beginning; but there is no point in ignoring major implications of this beginning until later, when they are already clear enough by now to enable us to remove some ongoing major misunderstandings of what Hegel is up to.

3.14. Substance and Subject

With regard to the resolution of Kant's problem about freedom that (in 3.9 and 3.10) I have been describing Hegel as achieving in the Doctrine of Being, readers may wonder how it relates to Hegel's later treatment of the relationship between "actuality" or "necessity" and freedom, in the latter part of the Doctrine of Essence (the second part of the Logic), which makes much more extensive reference to "freedom," as such. As I will show in Chapter 4, the concept that survives the criticism of Quality, Quantity, and Measure, in the Doctrine of Being, and which accordingly forms the core of the new concepts of Shine, Reflection, Actuality and Necessity, in the Doctrine of Essence, and which consequently underlies the culminating transition to "freedom," in the Concept, is negativity. As I explained in Section 3.13, negativity also contains the gist of true infinity. As I'll explain later in this chapter (3.24), true infinity runs into problems that lead to the lengthy rethinking process that makes up the rest of the Logic. But Hegel clearly thinks that despite its need for rethinking, true infinity has brought out implications of negativity that are permanently important; it's because of those implications (which I've been outlining in the last several sections) that he is able to refer to true infinity as "the fundamental concept of philosophy" (EL §96R). When negativity is (more or less explicitly) the underlying theme of the transition from Essence to Concept, from necessity to freedom, true infinity is (by implication) also very much present. Thus, negativity certainly, and true infinity indirectly, are crucial for understanding the transition to freedom at the end of the Doctrine of Essence.²⁸ How this works out in detail, I'll explain in Chapter 4.

²⁸ The problematic character of the Essence/Concept transition when taken "by itself," without reference to negativity and true infinity, is made especially evident by Charles Taylor's imaginative but confessedly unsuccessful attempt at reconstructing it without any such reference, in Chapter 11 of his *Hegel* (1975). One might also wonder what the relationship is between the answer that I claim Hegel is giving, in "Quality," to Kant's metaphysical dualism, and his elaborate critiques of Kantian dualism about motivation, and of other aspects of the Categorical Imperative, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the

Besides being essential to the transition from necessity to freedom, negativity and true infinity are, not surprisingly, equally essential to the same transition, at the end of “Essence,” under another and even more famous rubric, as the *transition from “substance” to “subject.”* Hegel announced the necessity of this transition in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (3: 23/PS §17), where he says that it can only be demonstrated by the full development of philosophical “science”: that is, by his Logic. But how Hegel thinks he demonstrates, in the Logic, the necessity of this transition – that is, of the transition that is fundamental to his “idealism,” as such – is one of the great mysteries of Hegel scholarship. I know of no careful commentator who even seems confident in her account of how the argument is supposed to work. Klaus Düsing says that Hegel does not really show “why the supersession of the separation of substances [at the end of Essence] must in fact be a *thinking*, and not just an essentially existing self-relationship.”²⁹ And Rolf-Peter Horstmann presents Hegel’s view that (as Horstmann puts it) “thinking and being are one and the same, or that only thinking has being,” not as something for which Hegel presents an argument, but simply as a “conviction” of Hegel’s, which underlies all of Hegel’s work and which “he never felt any need to question.”³⁰

I think Hegel presents an argument for his idealism, rather than just assuming its truth, and I think the outline of this argument can already be seen in his arguments for negativity and for true infinity. What Hegel argues there is that being can have its qualities by virtue of *itself*, only to the extent (1) that it negates its original negation (its dependence on others for its quality), and (2) that it goes beyond its finite determinations, in the manner suggested by the “ought,” and becomes free. Now if, as it seems reasonable to suppose, determinate being is a prototype of what Hegel later calls substance, and if, as Hegel says, “the beginning of the *subject*” is already present in the “something” that negates its negation (that is, that negates determinate being’s dependence on the

Philosophy of Right. I think that these critiques are mutually complementary. I do not think that one finds, in these latter texts, a response to Kant’s basic *metaphysical* dualism that is as focussed and as cogent as the response that I have been extracting, here, from the Logic. This must be because in his other critiques, Hegel presupposes the basic points about Kantian thinking that he elaborates here.

²⁹ Klaus Düsing, *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976), p. 231 (emphasis added).

³⁰ Rolf-Peter Horstmann, “Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich,” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), vol. 4, quotes from pp. 265 and 266.

other for its quality) (WL 5:123/GW 21:103,27/115; emphasis added), then negativity itself – the negation of the negation, which is (1) – already takes us, in principle, from Substance to Subject. It shows that Substance (or in this case, determinate being) cannot be what it is by virtue of itself without becoming Subject (that is, the “something”). The argument for true infinity, (2), develops this second negation into the idea of going beyond finite limitations, in the manner suggested by the “ought,” and thus into freedom. Though no explicit reference has yet been made to *thought*, as such, it isn’t difficult to imagine that when this notion of going beyond finite limitations through freedom is fully developed, this going-beyond will turn out (as it does in fact turn out, in the *Philosophy of Spirit*) to involve thought, and that in that way, thought will be shown to be more fundamental than being, or it will be shown that, as Horstmann puts it, “only thinking has being.”

The next several chapters of the present book will follow precisely that development – in which the transition from Essence to Concept is, of course, one major step. But even in its germinal form, in the argument for negativity and the argument for true infinity, the argument that I have been outlining makes Hegel’s “idealism” seem much more plausible than it seems when we encounter it in apparently dogmatic (“unquestioned”) formulations such as Horstmann’s. For if I’m right, Hegel is not denying that determinate being, finite being, substance, or nature has a certain kind of “reality.” What he is asserting is that the reality that determinate being, finite being, substance, and nature do have depends upon their relationship to negativity, infinite freedom, subjectivity, and spirit, since determinate being, finite being, substance, and nature by themselves lack the reality that would be constituted by their having their quality by virtue of themselves. Hegel’s notion that “reality” in the full sense should involve having one’s quality by virtue of oneself, rather than merely by virtue of one’s relation to other things, is sufficiently widely shared and sufficiently plausible in its own right that it is clearly not just a disguised version of his much more distinctive ultimate conclusion that substance is subject. Thus there seems to be good reason to expect that Hegel’s official transition from substance to subject and from necessity to freedom will be far more intelligible if we see it as relying, in significant part, on the arguments for negativity and true infinity. And since the transition from substance to subject and from necessity to freedom is the most prominent one in the *Logic* as a whole, and perhaps (in view of its manifestly far-reaching implications) even in the *System*, understanding it promises to make the *System* a much more plausible set of doctrines than it is commonly thought to be.

3.15. Modernity and “Metaphysics”: Hegel and His Predecessors

To those who are inclined to view the transition to the Concept as a transition from the “old-fashioned” interest in ontology (being and substance), or “metaphysics,” that is apparently a prominent feature of the Doctrines of Being and Essence, to a more “modern” interest in something like “discourse,” let me say four things. (1) The “Objectivity” portion of the Doctrine of the Concept seems, on the face of it, quite ontological, as does the *Philosophy of Nature*. (2) Subjectivity and its implicit “discourse” do not enter the Logic all at once, in the the Concept; rather, the “beginning of the Subject” is already present in the introduction of negativity, in the chapter on Quality, as we have seen. So there is no single watershed transition, from the “old-fashioned” to the new, “critical,” “post-Copernican,” non-“metaphysical” view. (3) Something like discourse is undoubtedly a major interest of the Logic, insofar as negativity and freedom implicitly involve language, thought, and (according to the “Idea”) intersubjectivity. *But* (4) the discourse that the Logic concerns itself with always incorporates negativity’s and freedom’s vertical dimension, of “going beyond” the other-determined or the finite or the particular (or, reading it from above, of the “concretization” of the universal), and by virtue of that dimension, this discourse continues to have *ontological implications*, in which Hegel clearly continues to be very interested, as we see from (for example) the texts mentioned in (1). If Hegel viewed pre-Kantian metaphysics as merely asking the wrong questions and assigning the wrong subject matter to philosophy, he could have dealt with it much more summarily than he does. When determinate being becomes negativity, and when substance “becomes subject,” negativity and subject contain *the truth of* determinate being and of substance, rather than replacing them with entirely different domains of interest. The way in which Hegel presents quality, quantity, substance, necessity, and so on (classical metaphysical topics) as systematically intertwined with negativity, freedom, and subjectivity (supposedly “modern” topics) – indeed, the way in which he presents the “beginning of the Subject” as the “negation of the negation,” thus analyzing it as the iteration of what initially is a clearly “metaphysical” category (see 3.5) – makes it clear that however critical Hegel may be of philosophy prior to Kant, he does not see it as a *mere* catalogue of mistakes. And if that is the case, it seems inappropriate to interpret the transition from Being and Essence to the Concept as a transition simply from the “wrong” (or “obsolete”) conception of philosophy to the “right” (or “modern”) one.

Just as Hegel finds significant truth in the finite (inasmuch as the true infinite is the self-transcendence *of* the finite), so he also finds significant truth in all of the major contributions to the Western philosophical tradition, and for a similar reason – namely, that *truth* (though generally, of course, only partial truth) is what achieves influence in human life and thought, insofar as human life and thought do transcend merely finite “error.” And Hegel thinks that a sign of philosophical depth is the ability to find that (partial) truth in doctrines that may, at first sight, seem obscure and wrong-headed. In pursuit of this sort of depth, he forgoes the gesture – which was popular in modern philosophy prior to himself (cf. Descartes, Bacon, Hume), and was again popular in such twentieth-century philosophies as logical positivism and existentialism – of dismissing the work of all or large categories of one’s predecessors, including (for example) mythological and religious as well as “meta-physical” thinkers, as “fundamentally flawed” and not worthy of serious attention. I submit that in forgoing this gesture, Hegel demonstrates a combination of modesty, respect for his fellow humans, *and* love of the truth, which deserves to be honored and emulated.³¹

3.16. Reality and Ideality, “Realism” and “Idealism”

Confirming my suggestion that the outline of his argument for his “idealism” is already present in his argument to true infinity, Hegel connects his account of true infinity directly with the concepts of “ideality” and “idealism.” “Determinate being,” he says, “has *reality*... but the *truth of* the finite is rather its *ideality*” (EL §95R; emphasis added), which is simply the fact that, for the reasons that we discussed in 3.4–3.6, “the finite [, as such,] has no veritable being” (WL 5: 172/GW 21:142,2/154). What is “ideal” [*ideelle*] is, Hegel says, “the finite as it is *in the true infinite* – as a determination, a content, which is distinct but is not an independent, subsistent being, but only a *moment*!”

31 This is not to say that Hegel’s respect for his fellow humans was perfect. He had little sympathetic understanding of animistic magic or (consequently) of black Africa, and his appreciation of Asian philosophy (which he tended to categorize as religion, as opposed to philosophy) was limited. It is quite possible that his thinking in these cases was affected by racism; it was certainly not as imaginative as it could have been. And he said things about the psychology of women that were certainly not imaginative. What I think we should emulate is not the limits of his imagination, but rather his refusal to categorize any school of philosophy, or any religion or “metaphysics,” as not worthy of serious attention for the truth that it may contain.

(WL 5: 165/GW 21:137,25/149–150; emphasis added), a part or an aspect of the true reality that is true infinity. He then uses this sense of “ideal” as the basis of his definition of “idealism”: “The proposition that the finite is ideal [that is, that it’s only a moment of true infinity] constitutes *idealism*” (WL 5: 172/GW 21:142,36/154). Hegel denies that there is any important contrast between “idealism,” in this sense, and “realism” (*ibid.*), and his reason for denying this is his earlier conclusion (discussed in 3.7) that “True infinity... is *reality in a higher sense* than the former reality which was simply determinate; for here it has received a concrete content. It is not the finite which is real, but the infinite” (WL 5: 164/GW 21:136,5–10/149; emphasis altered). I have explained how it is only through true infinity that a quality can be “real” in Hegel’s initial sense that it is what it is by virtue of itself. True infinity is “reality in a *higher sense*” because it actually *achieves* what the initial moment that was called “reality” aimed at: namely, to enable its owner to be what it is by virtue of itself, and not by virtue of its relations to others. So, returning to the notion of “ideality,” the assertion that the finite is “ideal” (in that it’s merely a moment of true infinity) is equivalent to the assertion that true infinity is “real,” in this “higher sense” that it succeeds in doing what the initial moment of reality had aimed at. So “idealism” does not conflict with “realism,” when each is applied to the proper item – “idealism” to the finite, and “realism” to the true infinite.³²

By now it should be clear – as I indicated at the outset would be the case – that what Hegel calls “idealism” is very different both from Bishop Berkeley’s (as Hegel calls it) “subjective idealism,” according to which all finite things except minds are composed of ideas that are

32 The systematic connection between “reality” (as Hegel defines that term) and “idealism” (as the doctrine that “the finite has no veritable being”) is not taken into account in much of the lively recent discussion of the precise nature of Hegel’s “idealism,” which consequently operates with concepts of “reality” whose connection to Hegel’s own use of that term is unclear. Thomas Wartenberg, for example, thinks that the important sense in which Hegel is an idealist is “because he believes that concepts determine the structure of reality” (“Hegel’s Idealism: The Logic of Conceptuality,” in F. Beiser, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], p. 103); and Edward Halper thinks it useful to describe Hegel as an idealist because “all the action in Hegel’s system belongs to the ideas. . . . Hegel does indeed see thought alone as real” (“The Idealism of Hegel’s System,” *The Owl of Minerva* 34 [2002–2003]: 20). Neither author makes any reference to Hegel’s account of what he calls *real* or *Realität*. Kenneth R. Westphal’s summary of what he calls Hegel’s “ontological idealism” is unusual in that he does collect and interpret Hegel’s key statements about the relation between *Realität* and infinity (*Hegel’s Epistemological Realism* [Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer, 1989], p. 142), though what he finds plausible or promising in Hegel lies elsewhere.

located in minds, and from Kant's "transcendental idealism," according to which the mind imposes major features (the categories and the forms of intuition) on the world. In contrast to these idealisms, Hegel's "idealism" simply insists that finite qualities, as such, are unreal, and that they achieve reality only by going beyond themselves in a way that is characteristic of free subjectivity (or, if you like, "mind"). Hegel chose the words "Idea" (which I'll discuss further in Chapter 5) and "ideal" because of their connection to Plato's and Aristotle's "*idea*" or "*eidos*," which, like his own "*Idee*," are not located "within" any mind, but rather designate *the intelligible aspect of what exists*. In arguing that finite qualities are mere "moments" of true infinity, Hegel has argued that they become fully intelligible (as "reality") only insofar as they transcend themselves, or become truly infinite. Their "ideality" – their status as moments of true infinity – is thus their intelligibility or their reality. That is why Hegel finds the Greek-derived term "ideality" (and, eventually, "Idea") an appropriate way of designating what he is driving at.

Next, Hegel proceeds to claim that *every* genuine philosophy is an "idealism," in the sense that it agrees that the finite has no veritable being (WL 5: 172/GW 21:142,37–2/154–155)! In the ancient and modern philosophies that come to mind as possible *counterexamples* to this claim, he says,

water, or matter, or atoms are *thoughts*, universals, ideal entities, not things as they immediately present themselves to us, that is, in their sensuous singularity – not even the water of Thales. For although this is also empirical water, it is at the same time also the in-itself or essence of all other things, and these other things are not self-subsistent . . . but are . . . derived from an other, from water, that is they are ideal entities.

(WL 5: 172/GW 21:142,14–21/155)

That is, since Thales regards water as the in-itself of everything else, he treats things in general as transcending their sensuous singularity, and becoming what they truly are, through their relationship with water. The presence of such transcendence in an apparently purely materialistic philosophy shows that materialism is not, as such, an anti-"idealist" doctrine, if one interprets "idealism" in the way that Hegel is proposing. Hegel's assertion that water and matter and atoms "are thoughts" is clearly not meant as an assertion that they are "in" any mind, as a "subjective idealism" would assert. Rather, it is an assertion that water and matter and atoms are non-empirical essences or truths that serve to give greater reality, and in that sense to give "ideality," to things as they

immediately present themselves to us. But, widely agreed to though this proposition might be, it is certainly not a trivial or an unimportant one, insofar as it implies that things as they immediately present themselves to us are *less real* than the transcending “in-itself” that explains them and gives them full reality. By recognizing this fact, as they implicitly do, materialist philosophies go a long way toward the sort of idealism that Hegel is advocating, which (again) is the recognition that finite things, as such, “have no veritable being” – that they are less real than things that transcend their finitude (“ideal” things) are.

In this passage, we see one of Hegel’s anticipatory replies to Ludwig Feuerbach’s and Karl Marx’s later complaints – complaints that, unfortunately, consistently ignore these anticipatory replies – that Hegel assumes that “ideas” or “thought” or “theory” are superior to “sensation” or “concrete social reality” or “practice.” Materialism itself, Hegel suggests, has never been satisfied with pure immediacy, but always seeks to go behind phenomenal experience and identify the higher reality that is at work in it. To that extent, materialism agrees with Hegel that neither sensation nor social relationships nor practice can be taken *simply at face value*. The disagreement between materialists and Hegel would then have to be about the *precise nature* of the “higher reality” that is at work, which Hegel identifies as true infinity, the free Concept, Spirit, and so on, whereas materialism identifies it as Thales’s “water,” Democritus’s “atoms” and “necessity,” Epicurus’s atoms and their unpredictable “swerve,” or Marx’s “matter” and his Promethean leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom. The only way to decide which is more plausible is to examine all of them in concrete detail.³³ One cannot simply dismiss one or the other as “metaphysical,” as “standing on its head,” or as “confusing subject with predicate,” as Hegel’s materialist critics tend to think they can do.³⁴

33 All of the present book would be relevant to such a comparison. I will leave it to the reader to consider Marx’s account of the higher reality that is at work, and whether it is more or less successful than Hegel’s.

34 With Hegel, the dialectic “is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell”: Karl Marx, *Capital. Volume One* (1867), at the end of “From the Afterword to the Second German Edition,” in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 302. Ludwig Feuerbach wrote that “We need only turn the *predicate* into the *subject* and thus as *subject* into *object* and *principle* – that is, only *reverse* speculative philosophy”: “Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy,” in *The Fiery Brook. Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach*, translated by Z. Hanfi (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), thesis 6, p. 154.

Even sophisticated contemporary interpreters of Hegel sometimes follow in Marx's footsteps on this issue. Michael Theunissen writes that in Hegel, the "difference between existence in the world and conceptual determination . . . [is,] as Marx would say, 'mystified.' The mystification is based on the idea that the Concept could 'overgrasp' *factual existence* [*faktische Existenz*], at least in the end, in just the same way that, from the beginning, it overgrasps *its own determinateness*."³⁵ Neither Theunissen nor Marx appears to have grasped Hegel's analysis of the concept of "reality" itself (which I explained in 3.4), with the result that they don't understand the role played by negativity and true infinity – and thus eventually by the Concept, thought, and Spirit – in *achieving* this "reality." For Hegel, the "existence in the world" or the "factual existence" that Theunissen refers to – like Feuerbach's "sensations" and Marx's "concrete social reality" – is unreal insofar as it is merely finite. To criticize Hegel's idealism in a way that responds to his *argument* for it, one would have to come to grips (at least) with his account of "reality," and the way in which it leads him to negativity and true infinity and thus to the "ideality" of the finite.³⁶

3.17. True Infinity and God

In his Introduction to the *Science of Logic*, Hegel described its topic as, among other things, "the exposition of God . . ." (WL 5: 44/GW 21:34,39–2/50). Readers who reject traditional theism sometimes seek ways of interpreting Hegel's theological language as not committing him to finding any truth in the traditional notion of a *transcendent* deity. Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, for example, in his detailed revisionist commentary (entitled *Hegels Analytische Philosophie*) on the *Encyclopedia Logic*, describes Hegel as proposing a "radically immanentist [*diesseitige*] way of reading religious or theological speech," for which "'belief in God' is . . . insight into [the] dependence of the individual's humanitas, his

35 Michael Theunissen, "Begriff und Realität. Hegels Aufhebung des metaphysischen Wahrheitsbegriffs," in *Seminar: Dialektik in der Philosophie Hegels*, ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), p. 352; emphasis added.

36 As far as I can see, Theunissen's ultra-subtle reading of these parts of Hegel's text in his major work, *Sein und Schein. Die kritische Funktion der hegelschen Logik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), esp. pp. 216–224, still fails to grasp the overall pattern and significance of Hegel's argument from "reality" to negativity and true infinity, and thus to his idealism.

individual knowledge and reason, on the universal culture of reason.”³⁷ I find this interpretation appealing but unfortunately one-sided. It would apply fairly well to much of what Hegel says about the individual’s relation to “objective spirit.” But an interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy as a whole as “immanentist” quite clearly overlooks Hegel’s argument that it is the finite’s “nature to be related to itself as limitation . . . and to transcend the same” [*über diesselbe hinauszu gehen*] (WL 5:150/GW 21:124, 27–29/138; emphasis added) (an argument that unfortunately is stated less clearly in the EL). The truth that Hegel finds in traditional conceptions of transcendence is that finite things achieve full reality only through their relationship to the infinite: that “finitude is only as a transcending of itself” (WL 5:160/GW 21:133, 34/145). If we ignore this latter truth, and Hegel’s argument for it, we will never understand either Hegel’s conception of freedom, or his major investment of effort, during the last decade of his life, in lecturing on the philosophy of religion. It is not an accident that explicitly “naturalistic” or atheistic interpretations of Hegel ignore his critique of the finite, his conception of freedom as being with oneself in the other, and his lectures on the philosophy of religion.³⁸ The hostile critics in the 1820s who assimilated Hegel’s

37 Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels Analytische Philosophie. Die Wissenschaft der Logik als kritische Theorie der Bedeutung* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1992), p. 427–428. The most influential interpretation of Hegel as an atheist is Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), translated by James H. Nichols as *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

38 Kojève divides Hegel into the supposedly atheistic *Phenomenology of Spirit*, on the one hand, and the supposedly theistic *Logic*, on the other hand, and rejects the latter in favor of the former (*Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, pp. 146–147). Stekeler-Weithofer is able to interpret the *Logic* as “immanentist” – as simply rejecting the traditional conception of transcendence – only by focussing, in his discussion of determinate being and true infinity (*Hegels Analytische Philosophie*, pp. 118–135), solely on the highly condensed *Encyclopedia Logic*, rather than on the *Science of Logic*, so that in his discussion, one finds no mention of “relation to oneself against one’s relation to others,” the “contradictory” nature of the finite, the “ought,” “going beyond oneself,” or “freedom.” Michael N. Forster, in his defense of a purely “naturalistic” and “antitranscendent” interpretation of Hegel’s account of the relation between God and man – a defense that is based mainly on the *Phenomenology* but also discusses the *Logic*’s doctrine of “identity” – likewise does not mention Hegel’s argument for the unreality of the finite (*Hegel’s Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998], pp. 197–204, quotes from pp. 197 and 198, n.13). Nor does Terry Pinkard mention it in arriving at the conclusion that “Hegel seemed to be denying any kind of transcendence (at least in a non-trivial sense) to God” (*German Philosophy 1760–1860. The Legacy of Idealism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], p. 303). In his discussion of true infinity, Pinkard writes that “the world as a whole is thus to be explained in terms internal to the world itself, not in terms

philosophy to “pantheism” made the same mistake of ignoring his demonstration that the finite, and thus nature, is not self-sufficient, but needs to go beyond itself. This, in Hegel's view, is what is true in traditional conceptions of transcendence and in traditional religion.

What is *false* in traditional conceptions of transcendence and in traditional religion, Hegel brings out by criticizing a conception of God as *merely* “transcendent” – as simply a “beyond.” Hegel's most famous version of this critique is his discussion of the “Unhappy Consciousness,” in Chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (3:163–177/Miller trans., §§207–230). In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel says that in a conception of God as merely “transcendent” (my word and my scare quotes), “the finite and the infinite only stand opposed in such a way that the finite is duplicated” (VPRel 1:211/1:307) – which, of course, is his objection to the “spurious infinity”: that in it, the “infinite” is in fact limited by the finite that it excludes, and thus is, in fact, finite. Thus the only *true* transcendence is one that includes the finite, in the manner of true infinity (for which “infinity is only as a transcending of the finite” [WL 5:160/GW 21:134,36/145]).³⁹ But this “inclusion” does not *reduce* infinity to the finite, precisely because the finite achieves its own *reality* only through this transcendence – through the infinitude that it achieves. (“Finitude is only as a *transcending* of itself” [WL 5:160/GW 21:133,34/145].)

So it is only if, following the analysis of true infinity, we keep both aspects in view at the same time – that God *is* transcendent, but that the notion of transcendence must be *reconceived*, along the lines of true infinity, in order to achieve what it aims to achieve – that we will be able to see how Hegel simultaneously defends and criticizes traditional theism.⁴⁰ It is clear, I think, that in his well-known attack on Hegel's

of anything ‘infinite’ and external to it . . . and especially not in terms of any supernatural infinite” (p. 253). But although true infinity is indeed not “external to” the finite (as the spurious infinity tries to be), it *does* “transcend” the finite [*über diesselbe hinausgehen*] (WL 5:150/GW 21:125,29/138). And in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel describes Spirit as a “coming back out of Nature” (EG §381), to itself, and the “positing of Nature as its [Spirit's] world” (§384). We need to determine what Hegel means by these formulations, and in the absence of other suggestions, it is reasonable to think that he means them to capture what is true in the traditional notion of divine transcendence.

39 Thus, in one lecture transcript, Hegel is reported as saying that “Without the world God is not God” (LPR, vol. 1, p. 308, n. 97).

40 When Paul Guyer compares Hegel's argument for the possibility of going beyond finitude, in EL §60R, to Descartes's first argument for the existence of God, in his Third

metaphysical theology, Ludwig Feuerbach did not understand this simultaneous defense and criticism, but rather assumed that if one speaks of genuine transcendence, one must be speaking of something that is radically opposed to (rather than “with itself in”) what it transcends.⁴¹ And in his “anthropotheistic” alternative to Hegel’s theology, Feuerbach also clearly assumed both that the reality of *finite* things (unlike that of God) is not a problem – that it can be taken for granted – and that there is no important sense in which humans can or need to transcend their finite nature. Like so many other post-Idealist thinkers, Feuerbach assumed that Platonic or Kantian transcendence inevitably leads either to a simple denial of finite existence or to an unintelligible “two-worlds” supernaturalism – precisely the fate from which Aristotle and, above

Meditation (“Thought and Being: Hegel’s Critique of Kant,” in Frederick C. Beiser, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Hegel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], p. 204), he overlooks the difference between Descartes’s orthodox theistic conception of God as distinct and logically separable from the finite world, and Hegel’s conception of God as true infinity, which “is only as a transcending of the finite” (WL 5:160/GW 21:133,36–37/145–146). Charles Taylor makes the same mistake when he describes finite things (for Hegel) as “vehicles” for the embodiment of cosmic Spirit (*Hegel*, p. 89) (see 3.22 for more on Taylor’s interpretation). And G. A. Cohen also makes it, in his thoughtful account of the progression of thought from Hegel to Feuerbach and Marx, when he says that for Hegel, “there is no reality in anything save insofar as it manifests the divine. This means that the divine does exist here below, but also that nothing here below has any reality of its *own*: it owes its reality to what is divine in it” (*If You’re an Egalitarian, How Come You’re So Rich?* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000], p. 93). Cohen overlooks Hegel’s account of the failure of finite quality to *be* “its own,” to be what it is by virtue of itself rather than by virtue of its relations to others, and the way in which true infinity (which is not a “power existing outside” the finite [WL 5:160/GW 21:133,39–1/145–146]) enables the finite, by going beyond itself, to *achieve* that “ownness.” Cohen is very interested in Hegel’s doctrine that “without the world, God is not God” (p. 83; see note 39), but he doesn’t trace that doctrine to its root in Hegel’s analysis of true infinity. As a result, Cohen doesn’t see how Hegel’s theology criticizes the traditional conception of transcendence, how Feuerbach and Marx fail to understand this critique, and how Feuerbach’s and Marx’s critiques of Hegel consequently miss their target.

- ⁴¹ “The essence of theology is the *transcendent*; i.e., the essence of man posited *outside man*. The essence of Hegel’s *Logic* is *transcendent* thought; i.e., the thought of man posited *outside man*” (“Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy,” in *The Fiery Brook. Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach*, translated by Z. Hanfi [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972], thesis 12, p. 156 [emphasis altered] see also theses 16, 22, and 23; *Kleine Schriften*, ed. Karl Löwith (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966), pp. 126–129). It is difficult to imagine Feuerbach writing these sentences in this way if he had been properly aware of Hegel’s doctrine that “the finite is not superseded by the infinite as by a power existing *outside* it; rather, its infinity consists in superseding *its own self*” (WL 5:160/GW 21:133,38–2/145–146; emphasis added), or of Hegel’s corresponding critique of the conception of the infinite as the “beyond” (“It is only the spurious infinite which is the *beyond*” [WL 5:164/GW 21:136,26/149; compare PR §22R]).

all, Hegel, in his account of true infinity, had striven to *save* (a revised version of) Platonic and Kantian transcendence!

Here, then, is a preliminary summary of what Hegel's argument accomplishes in theology. Just as, in superseding Kantian transcendental idealism in the way that I explained in 3.10, Hegel preserves what is true in the noumenal "world" *and* what is true in the phenomenal "world," what is true in Kant's transcendentalism and what is true in empiricist and naturalist critiques of Kant's transcendentalism, so also in superseding traditional theism, Hegel preserves what is true in the traditional conception of transcendence *and* what is true in naturalist critiques of the idea of transcendence. What is true in the traditional conception of transcendence is that "finitude *is* only as a *transcending* of itself" (WL 5:160/GW 21:133,34/145), and what is true in naturalist critiques of the idea of transcendence is that to be fully intelligible, a conception of something as real must explain how it relates to whatever else is real, rather than simply positing two disparate and unrelated kinds of "reality." Hegel provides for the latter truth by reconceiving the notion of transcendence along the lines of true infinity, for which, rather than being "a power existing outside" the finite, "infinity *is* only as a transcending of the finite" (WL 5: 160/GW 21:133,36–37/145–146). The *first* proposition, that "finitude *is* only as a *transcending* of itself," presents a conception of transcendence that captures an important truth in the religious and theological tradition that is not appreciated by the Enlightenment critique of those traditions (or by the Enlightenment's own pantheism, deism, atheism, or "anthropotheism"), and this truth is protected by the second proposition (that "infinity *is* only as a transcending of the finite") against Enlightenment naturalism's objection that we can't intelligibly postulate two disparate and unrelated kinds of "reality." It's because Hegel combines a truth of traditional religion and theology (that finitude *is* only as a *transcending* of itself) with a truth of Enlightenment naturalism (that we can't intelligibly postulate two disparate and unrelated kinds of "reality"), into a coherent combination, that his doctrine is so unfamiliar that readers have great trouble simply identifying what it is. It is neither traditional theism, nor traditional atheism, nor pantheism, nor deism, nor Feuerbachian "anthropotheism," *because* none of these does justice both to theism and to Enlightenment naturalism in the way that Hegel's doctrine does. Grasping what Hegel's doctrine is alters one's perception of the traditional alternatives – especially theism and atheism, "religion" and "naturalism" – in a liberating way, because

it suggests, contrary to deeply entrenched assumptions, that we can actually do justice to *both* of these alternatives simultaneously.

Hegel's argument does more than protect a revised version of divine transcendence against charges of *unintelligibility*, by interpreting transcendence (true infinity) as the self-transcendence of the finite. It also gives us reason to regard this reinterpreted transcendence as real. This reason is Hegel's critique of finitude – his argument that finitude *is* only as a transcending of itself. This is, in effect, a revised and more defensible version of traditional arguments for the existence of God, and in particular, of the “ontological argument.” Introduced by St. Anselm in the eleventh century, used by Descartes and others, and criticized by Kant, the ontological argument says that if God is defined as the sum of all perfections, God must exist, for surely existence is a perfection and non-existence an imperfection. Kant objects that it must be possible to think about all of the properties of a possible thing without being committed to thinking of it either as existing or as not existing. So existence is not a predicate like (say) power or goodness, and so it should not be counted as a “perfection,” comparable to omnipotence or perfect goodness. (In modern formal logic, this distinction between existence and predicates is embodied in the difference between the existential quantifier – which is used to make statements about existence and non-existence – and predicate variables.) To Kant's objection, Hegel replies, in effect, that the combination of being and thought (or freedom), in true infinity and in God (Absolute Spirit), embodies a developed understanding of what being or existence must be in order to be fully “real,” so that it makes no sense to be “uncommitted” here – to consider it an open question whether this God exists or not. If the argument of the Logic works, this God is what most of all “is” (what most of all is “real”), because that's precisely what he (or it) has been constructed to be (see EL §51R). God's other predicates (if any) follow from “his” being or reality, rather than his being or reality being tacked on to his other predicates. This status of Absolute Spirit or of the Concept is clear from the structure of Hegel's system as a whole, in which “being” is the first concept, so that all later concepts include being, superseded but still present, within them. But it is especially clear when one sees the role that “reality” plays in the argument to true infinity, that the purpose of the Logic is to produce a developed conception of what is real, so that if something that appears to be divine results from the Logic's argument, that divine thing automatically has to be real. Hegel's argument for God's reality resembles the “ontological” argument insofar

as it focusses on being as one of God's essential features; it differs from traditional versions of the ontological argument insofar as it makes being God's *only* essential feature, and derives his nature from this being, rather than defining God as something else (the "sum of all perfections") and then arguing that his being follows from that definition.⁴²

In view of its subtlety, it's no wonder that Hegel's theological position continues to be the subject of much confusion. It seems to me, however, that to the extent that we can keep Hegel's fundamental idea of "supersession" (*Aufhebung*) – the picking apart of the genuinely false from the genuinely true – before our minds, while considering this issue – rather than supposing, as writers such as Feuerbach, Kojève, and Stekeler-Weithofer do, that one must either simply accept "transcendence, as such," or simply reject it – then the point that Hegel is making about "*true* infinity" and thus about *true* transcendence can help us to escape some of the less fruitful features of the seemingly permanent "war" between humanism and theology – both among those who consider themselves Hegel's sympathizers, and in the world at large. Assuming, on the other hand, that we know in advance, from traditional (pre-Hegelian) discourse, what must be meant by terms such as "transcendence" or "God" or "Spirit" – or, correspondingly, that we know in advance what the relevant doctrinal *possibilities* are (namely, in particular, "theism" and "atheism") – will prevent us from understanding how Hegel supersedes these possibilities, and thus will doom us to continue stumbling back and forth between the traditional and (to many of us, for good reasons) unacceptable alternatives.⁴³

42 Hegel derives God's *love* from his being, in the Doctrine of the Concept (see 5.2), and God's *justice* in the Objective Spirit section of the *Philosophy of Spirit* (6.10). On the history of the ontological argument and the nature of Hegel's revised version of it, see Dieter Henrich, *Der ontologische Gottesbeweis: Sein Problem und seine Geschichte in der Neuzeit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967), and Kevin Joseph Harrelson, *Hegel's Defense of the Ontological Argument for the Existence of God*, dissertation, University of Kentucky, 2003. Unfortunately, neither Henrich nor Harrelson identifies the way in which Hegel appeals to the experience of the "Ought" in order to demonstrate to Kantians that they themselves engage in the "elevation" that Hegel interprets as the "elevation to God" (cf. Harrelson's remarks in Chapter 4 about this "elevation").

43 The most comprehensive account of the development of Hegel's philosophy of religion, and of the early controversies about it is Walter Jaeschke, *Reason and Religion. The Foundations of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). A very helpful book on the development of Hegel's thought about God up to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is Stephen Crites, *Dialectic and Gospel in the Development of Hegel's Thinking* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998). Un-

3.18. Two Contrasting Critiques of Hegel's Theology: Heidegger and Magee

We can sharpen our understanding further by seeing how the theology that I find in Hegel's account of true infinity stands up against a couple of noteworthy recent critiques. Following in the path of critiques articulated by Pascal and Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger raises the objection, against the "god of philosophy" (where he has in mind Hegel as well as Aristotle and Spinoza), that "man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this God. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god," and Heidegger contrasts this philosophers' god to the "divine God" (*dem göttlichen Gott*; emphasis added) in relation to whom these traditional religious actions do make sense.⁴⁴ But what Heidegger says here doesn't seem to apply to Hegel's *truly infinite* God, which is the self-transcendence of (among other finite things) the *finite gods* – made finite by their various more or less anthropomorphic traits (and their mutual exclusions) – to whom we pray, fall on our knees, and so on. If religions embody, to a significant degree, the efforts of their human adherents to go beyond their merely finite being, in order to be themselves and thus to be "real," and if the truly infinite *God* is the result of the more finite religious institutions and "gods" going beyond *themselves*, in order to carry out this project of their adherents' going beyond their merely finite being – which is a process that we can probably observe going on, historically, in many actual religions, as their adherents become more sophisticated about what they believe – and if the truly infinite God "is only as a transcending of" (WL 5: 160/GW 21:133,36–37/145–146; see

fortunately, neither of these books deals with the *Science of Logic*. A number of recent commentators use the term "panentheism" – meaning "the belief that the being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part of it exists in him, but that his being is more than, and is not exhausted by, the universe" (F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. [London: Oxford University Press, 1974], as cited by Raymond Keith Williamson, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1984], p. 254) – to categorize Hegel's conception of the relation between God and the world. (Williamson provides a good discussion and references in his Chapter 12.) "Panentheism" is meant to be contrasted, of course, both to pantheism and to traditional theism. Since Hegel makes it clear that the Logic, and true infinity in particular, provides his most systematic statement on the relation between God and the world, it is clear that a full explanation of his panentheism (if we choose to call it that) will depend upon a clarification of true infinity.

44 Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, translated by Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 72; German text, pp. 140–141.

3.9 and 3.17) these finite, traditional gods and religions and of their adherents – then whatever we do in the way of prayer, falling on our knees, and so forth, in relation to the finite gods of traditional religions, we do, to some degree, in relation to the truly infinite God as well. So we don't have to choose, in an "either/or" fashion, between the (so to speak) "old time religion" that Heidegger invokes, and the "god of philosophy" – as long as the latter god is conceived in the manner of true infinity, as the self-supersession of the finite (including the finite, traditional gods). Respect for the one, when properly understood, will entail respect for the other.

This thought is an important part of Hegel's response not only to critics such as Heidegger, but also to his "humanist" critics. If philosophy ignored the finite gods of traditional religions – which at least transcend nature, to some degree – and gave full respect only to nature's finitude, perhaps to art's "infinite," and perhaps to its own (completely non-religious) "infinite," it would not be possible for philosophy to achieve the "transcending of the finite" that is the true infinity. Because infinity "is only as a transcending of" what is finite, successful transcendence involves respecting, experiencing, seeing the limits of, and superseding (*preserving while cancelling*) *all of the stages of* transcendence, including religion. (Chapter 6 will explain the way in which religion is a necessary stage in the transcendence that is "Spirit.") A "humanism" that fails to respect, experience, supersede, and thus subsume religion, and instead imagines that philosophy can simply stand on its own, will not achieve true infinity. Being founded on the conception of true infinity, Hegel's philosophy does not make this mistake.⁴⁵

There is a second point that needs to be made in response to Heidegger's critique of the "god of philosophy." If we were to look around in the history of religious expression for modes of expression that are *most* in keeping with the "god of philosophy," and with Hegel's truly infinite God in particular, an obvious candidate would be the actions and writings of "mystics," whether Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Platonist, Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, or indigenous. Hegel expressed sympathy (for example) for Plotinus and Proclus, leading Neoplatonist mystics and philosophers, for Meister Eckhart and Jakob Böhme, Christian mystical writers, and for Jelaluddin Rumi, the great

45 This, I think, is Hegel's most basic answer to Terry Pinkard's question: "If we realized that religion, too, could not fully give us what we needed, why then did we still need to go to devotional service?" (*German Philosophy 1760–1860*, p. 304).

Sufi poet and mystic – while always insisting that true mysticism, as exhibited in these writers, is not mere “enthusiasm” [“*Schwärmeret*”], but instead rests on a “rational” unification along the lines of his own unification of the finite and the infinite in true infinity.⁴⁶ The mystical traditions in general have a less anthropomorphic conception of God or of the divine than traditional religions tend to work with, and the relation to God or the divine that they speak of is correspondingly more “direct,” and less mediated by traditional forms of worship, including those that Heidegger mentions as appropriate to the “divine God” that he has in mind. But there can be no doubt that the relations to God or divinity that mystics experience and describe are at least as intense and meaningful for the mystics as are those of the old time religion that Heidegger refers to, for its adherents.

None of this, however, leads the mystics to condemn the more mediated, traditional ways of relating to God (still less to reject traditional modes of worship as the misguided worship of “false gods”). Rather, mysticism universally sees these traditional modes as containing at least the germ of the truth to which it has a more direct access. Hegel does the same thing in his discussions of religion in general, in which he examines the history and variety of religions as embodying in less-developed ways what he finds most explicitly developed in Christianity (as he understands it), and in the philosophical conception of God that he advocates. And this is exactly what he *should* do, to be consistent with his guiding idea of true infinity, for which the infinite, and thus the divine, is not the opposite of the finite (because that would render it finite, itself), but rather is the finite’s transcendence of itself. Heidegger’s criticism of the “god of philosophy,” or of “ontotheology,” as he calls it, and the similar criticisms articulated by Pascal and Kierkegaard before

46 On Plotinus and Proclus, see *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*/TWA 19:435–486; on Böhme, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* /TWA 20:91–119; on Meister Eckhart, VPR 1:248/1:347–348; on Rumi, EG §573R, TWA 10:386–387/308 and footnote. Hegel identifies “the mystical” with his own “speculative” thinking (which is exemplified for us in his conception of the unity of the finite and the infinite in true infinity), or with “reason” [*Vernunft*] as opposed to the mere “understanding” [*Verstand*]: “When it is regarded as synonymous with the speculative, the *mystical* is the concrete unity of just those determinations that count as true for the *understanding* only in their separation and opposition. . . . Thus, everything *rational* [*Alles vernünftige*] can equally be called ‘mystical’; but this only amounts to saying that it transcends the understanding” (EL §82A/133; emphasis added). Hegel discusses the accusation of “*Schwärmeret*” in detail in connection with Plotinus (*Lectures on the History of Philosophy*/TWA 19:440–445). For a penetrating survey of the literature of mysticism in all of the major religions, see Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (1944; New York: Harper, 1970).

him, have been received in many quarters with sympathy, but I wonder whether those who find these criticisms persuasive have paid sufficient attention either to Hegel's conception of true infinity or to the experience that seems to be shared by all the mystical traditions, of a powerful relation to God or to the divine that is not restricted to, and appears not to depend in any essential way upon the finite, literal instantiation of, the sorts of activity that Heidegger mentions as characteristic of a relation to the "divine God." The mystical traditions seem to do precisely what Hegel advises us to do, which is to retain the notion that divinity transcends the finite, while not interpreting this transcendence in the traditional way, as a polar opposition.

A second, very different line of criticism of Hegel's theology regards it not as too "philosophical," but quite the reverse, as not truly "rationalistic," and as not really deserving to be described as "philosophy" at all. Glenn Alexander Magee identifies several important features of Hegel's metaphysical theology that he thinks qualify it as a part of the "Hermetic" tradition – the occultist or theosophical tradition beginning in the so-called *Corpus Hermeticum* around 100 AD and extending through medieval and early modern writers such as (sure enough) Meister Eckhart and Jakob Böhme – and he sees this entire tradition as very much opposed to what he refers to as "rationalism." Two of the distinctive theological doctrines that Hegel shares with the Hermetic tradition, according to Magee, and that appear to Magee to have no "rationalist" credentials, are that:

1. God requires creation in order to be God.
2. God is in some sense completed or has a need fulfilled through man's contemplation of Him.⁴⁷

Now, from Hegel's account of true infinity – which Magee unfortunately does not relate to the Hegelian doctrines that he identifies as substantially identical to these Hermetic doctrines – we understand that the reason why God "requires creation in order to be God" is that a "God" who is diametrically opposed to the world (so that he *doesn't* "require" the world to exist) depends upon his opposition to the (actual

47 Glenn Alexander Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 13. Magee gives an overview, in his first two chapters, of the "Hermetic tradition," in which he includes Meister Eckhart, Jakob Böhme, and Rosicrucians, Freemasons, and Swabian Pietists. Magee writes on p. 17 that if his book is successful, "it will no longer be possible to treat [Hegel] as an 'arch rationalist,' as many still do." On the alleged difference between Hegel and "philosophy," see pp. 8 and 120.

or possible) world to *define* (“determine,” specify) what he is, and in this way *depends upon* the world, and thus is *not truly transcendent* and not truly God – so that the only way for God to be truly God, truly transcendent, is by being the world’s self-transcendence rather than its polar opposite. Hegel sympathizes with the Hermetic tradition insofar as it appears to understand (in some way) that the conventional conception of transcendence encounters this problem, and consequently it tries to construct a relationship between God and creation that allows God to be truly transcendent (“truly infinite”), by being creation’s self-transcendence, rather than its polar opposite.

This explains why, according to Magee’s second point of comparison, God is “completed through man’s contemplation of Him.” This is because it is the finite’s going beyond itself that constitutes God. True infinity exists only as the finite’s going beyond itself, which occurs when humans (and other parts of the world) achieve varying degrees of freedom, and thus ultimately “contemplate God.” (We’ll see in Chapter 6 how the finite’s going beyond itself ultimately takes the forms of art, religion, and philosophy – how the contemplation of God is the ultimate stage in the constitution of God.) According to Magee, “This Hermetic doctrine of the ‘circular’ relationship between God and creation and the necessity of man for the completion of God is utterly original. It is not to be found in earlier philosophy . . . and it is the chief doctrinal identity between Hermeticism and Hegelian thought” (p. 10). It may be the absence of anything quite like this doctrine in Plato, Aristotle,⁴⁸ or Kant that persuades Magee that Hegel, and the Hermetic tradition in general, cannot be regarded as “rationalist” in the same sense that (presumably) Plato, Aristotle, and Kant count as “rationalists” (and perhaps, indeed, as Magee’s repeated references to Hermetic and Hegelian “magic” suggest, that Hegel and other Hermeticists should really be counted, instead, as “irrationalists”).

But with the understanding of true infinity that we have now arrived at, I think it is at least as plausible to suggest that by developing a conception of reason that avoids the antagonistic dualisms that Kant’s

⁴⁸ Hegel himself suggests that the gist of his own conception of spirit and of man’s role in relation to spirit was anticipated by Aristotle. He does this by quoting one of Aristotle’s discussions of God as contemplation (*Metaphysics*, 7, 1072b18–30) at the conclusion of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, EG §577 (compare EG §378). An illuminating account of Aristotle’s distinctive theology (including this passage from the *Metaphysics*) is given by C. D. C. Reeve, *Substantial Knowledge. Aristotle’s Metaphysics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), Chapter 8.

rationalism (for example) falls into, with respect to practical reasoning, freedom, and God, Hegel is in fact a *more thorough-going* rationalist than his predecessors. Hegel shows how reason can understand its relation to the “non-rational” inclinations, body, and world in a way that doesn’t – unsuccessfully, and thus *irrationally* – “flee” from them.⁴⁹ If Hegel’s more thorough-going rationalism enables him to find anticipations of his own progress, on this issue of the nature of true (rational) transcendence, in writings that have been stigmatized as non-“philosophical” or as “irrationalist,” that may reflect the unusual power of his insight into the nature of rationality and transcendence, rather than his having diverged from philosophy into irrationalism.⁵⁰

That Hegel’s theology can be attacked in such radically opposed ways – as too “philosophical,” and as not really “philosophical” at all – suggests, at least, that it contains something rather distinctive that is not readily grasped by conventional categories. In particular, Hegel clearly

49 Remembering his trenchant remark that “*flight* is not a liberation from what is . . . fled from; the one that excludes still remains connected to [*in Verbindung mit*] what it excludes” (WL 5:196/GW 21:163, 10–13/175; emphasis added).

50 Magee’s five remaining parallels between Hermeticism and Hegel (given on p. 13 of his book) are: 3. They aim at “capturing the whole of reality in a complete, encyclopedic speech”; 4. Man becomes empowered or perfected through this speech; 5. “Man can know the aspects or ‘moments’ of God”; 6. There is an initial stage of “purification” from false doctrines (in Hegel, this stage is the *Phenomenology of Spirit*); and 7. “The universe is an internally related whole pervaded by cosmic energies” (Hegel, according to Magee, “rejects the philosophy of mechanism [and] upholds what the followers of Bradley would later call a doctrine of ‘internal relations’” [p. 14]). Magee says elsewhere (call this “8”) that “Hermeticism replaces the love of wisdom with the lust for power, [and] Hegel’s system is the ultimate expression of this pursuit of mastery” (p. 8). To begin with 3, it seems that any philosopher who does not believe that knowledge can be founded on unmediated “givens” must aim for some sort of comprehensively circular speech, though (of course) this project is not always as explicit as it is in Hegel. As for 4 and 5, they seem to be simply correlates of 1 and 2, and thus they don’t undermine Hegel’s “rationalist” credentials any more than 1 and 2 do. The “power” or “mastery” to which Magee refers here and in 8, belongs (for Hegel) to God, and humans do indeed participate in it insofar as they go beyond their finitude and constitute God. But it does not accrue to individual humans *as such*, and thus it doesn’t implement the vision of “*man as magus*” (p. 7; emphasis added) to which Magee alludes. 6, the stage of “purification,” seems to be an inevitable correlate of any ambitious cognitive enterprise; compare, for example, Plato’s *Republic* i–ii, Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* i, or Descartes’s *Meditations* i. As for 7, presumably Bradley qualifies as a philosopher, rather than as an irrationalist, so that even if Hegel did agree with Bradley on this point (which in fact he doesn’t, because the theme of Hegel’s *Logic* is precisely the *conflict* between selfhood and the interrelatedness of “negation,” so that the Concept’s and Spirit’s “identity” is about diversity and separateness, and indeed about “mechanism,” just as much as it is about relatedness), this would not make Hegel an irrationalist.

requires us to abandon the common idea that rationality and mysticism are mutually incompatible. (A sympathetically inclusive reading of Plato would probably have the same effect.) I hope that my account of true infinity has begun to reveal what constitutes the distinctive content of Hegel's theology, and why it produces such remarkably contrasting objections. Any doctrine that aims to go beyond the established oppositions between theism and naturalistic atheism and between mysticism and rationalism is inevitably going to encounter a remarkably disparate array of objections.

3.19. Knowledge, Skepticism, and True Infinity

An objection that is often raised against Hegel's theology, and against his philosophy in general, for that matter, is that they seem to claim too much knowledge, of too many things, to be "realistic." There is a strong inclination in modern religious thinking to regard the claim to "know God" as foolishly grandiose: One can have "faith" in God, people say, but not knowledge of God. As for philosophy, it has an ancient tendency – beginning, perhaps, with Socrates's critiques of his contemporaries' claims to knowledge, and his disavowals of any knowledge of his own – toward skepticism. In keeping with that tendency, Glenn Alexander Magee (for one) describes Hegel's doctrine as incompatible with true "philosophy," which Magee takes to be the love of or the search for wisdom, as opposed to the possession of it.⁵¹ I will discuss the issue between philosophy and skepticism in this section, and the issue about knowledge versus "faith" in the next section.

It is often pointed out, in response to criticisms such as Magee's, that Hegel himself took a serious interest in skepticism (and especially in ancient Greek skepticism) in his early academic work in Jena, as we can see from his essay "On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy" (1802) (TWA 2:213–272/Skep). And it is suggested, reasonably, that Hegel found what he thought was an effective response to this skepticism, and indeed that his *Phenomenology of Spirit* embodies such a response (one that might justify his paying less attention to the challenge of skepticism in his later work). My own suggestion is going to be that the essence of Hegel's response to skepticism can be seen in true infinity, itself, so that that response *pervades* the entire

51 Glenn Alexander Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, pp. 8, 120.

systematic philosophy of which true infinity is the “fundamental concept” (EL §95R).⁵²

As I've explained, true infinity is the infinity that is the finite's going beyond (superseding) itself, and that alone makes the finite, itself, real, in the sense of being what it is by virtue of itself, rather than by virtue of its relationships to other finite things. And Hegel explains this “going beyond” to us by appealing to our experience of the “ought,” in which we acknowledge the authority, over us, of something that goes beyond our particular, finite inclinations, and that seems to offer us the opportunity to be whole, to be “ourselves,” in a way that we cannot be if we simply follow our strongest inclination. We acknowledge, that is, the authority of selfhood. There is no point in acting – or, for that matter, in *believing* – in a way that conflicts with this selfhood, because to do so would diminish one's potential reality, as oneself. A *belief* that conflicted with selfhood would be, say, believing in “the first thing that popped into one's head,” as opposed to believing in something that one arrived at after due consideration. If belief is a close relative of action – it does seem (for example) that one is *responsible* for one's beliefs, just as one is responsible for what are ordinarily called “actions” – then it may seem appropriate to apply Hegel's remarks about the “ought” to beliefs as well as to “actions” of the ordinary kind. It will become evident in the Doctrine of the Concept, in particular, that Hegel does have in mind a broad conception of selfhood as exhibited in responsible belief as well as in responsible action (see 5.3); and it's appropriate that he should have such a broad conception in mind, since reasoning about belief goes beyond initial inclinations and assumptions, and in that sense beyond “finitude,” in the same way that reasoning about action does.

Now, Hegel tells us that the actions and beliefs that respond to the authority of selfhood (the “ought”) are, in effect, God. They are the finite's going beyond itself, which is the true infinity (to which Hegel

52 Important recent publications on Hegel's relation to skepticism include: Michael N. Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Michael N. Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Hans Friedrich Fulda and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, eds., *Skeptizismus und spekulative Denken in der Philosophie Hegels* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1996); Kenneth R. Westphal, *Hegel's Epistemological Realism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989); and Kenneth R. Westphal, *Hegel's Epistemology. A Philosophical Introduction to the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003). Michael Inwood gives a good brief statement of formal ways in which Hegel's system responds to the challenge of skepticism in his *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 264 – 265. None of these works identifies the way in which, as I will argue, Hegel's response to skepticism pervades his entire system.

will apply explicitly theological language later, in the Doctrine of the Concept [see 5.2] and the *Philosophy of Spirit*, as well as in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*).

How, I now ask, can one be skeptical about *this* God? As Hegel says, “This infinite . . . *is* and *is there*, present, encountered” (*präsent, gegenwärtig*) (WL 5: 164/GW 21:136,25/149). When the skeptic asks, what authority do you have for this doctrine, this belief about “reality”? – the answer is that this doctrine or belief begins as, simply, an articulation of the *experience of seeking* authority for a doctrine or a belief, rather than believing the first thing that comes into one’s head; and it then goes on to draw consequences, from the phenomenon of our seeking such an authority, for “reality”: that such a search itself creates a kind or degree of “reality,” in the searcher, that wouldn’t otherwise exist (by enabling the searcher to be what she is by virtue of herself, rather than by virtue of her relations to others). So the skeptic’s question – “What authority do you have for this doctrine?” – itself takes for granted something like at least the first step of the argument that it questions. The skeptic may, by all means, try to articulate the experience in question – the experience of seeking authority for a doctrine or a belief – in a way that differs from Hegel’s articulation of it, but she can’t *deny that there is* such an experience without depriving the discussion that she is having, with Hegel, of any significance (since her intervention in the discussion, which is her questioning of whether Hegel’s doctrine has any rational authority, presupposes that there is such an experience).⁵³ It seems, then, that the only place where the skeptic can reasonably focus her doubts is on the second step of Hegel’s argument, which is his account of how the experience of seeking authority for a doctrine or belief creates a kind of reality, in the searcher and in the world that generated the searcher, that wouldn’t otherwise be present there. Future discussion might show how this second step can be reasonably undermined, but for the present, I (for one) find it persuasive, for the reasons that I have explained in this chapter.

If I have correctly identified the response to skepticism that is implicit in Hegel’s account of true infinity, then it should be clear that

⁵³ This response to skepticism would be similar to Aristotle’s response to a person who denies the Principle of Non-Contradiction: “It is possible to demonstrate by refutation even that [the denial of PNC] is impossible, if only the disputant *speaks of something*. If he speaks of nothing, it is ridiculous to look for rational discourse . . . for in so far as he lacks rational discourse, such a person makes himself like a vegetable” (*Metaphysics* 1006a11–15; emphasis added).

Hegel's philosophy doesn't simply reject, or simply "refute," skeptical objections. Rather, Hegel acknowledges skepticism as the legitimate search for rational authority (for belief or action), and he builds that search *into* his account of *reality*, and of how we (as seekers or knowers) relate to reality. *Reality is itself the search for rational authority* (since only something that seeks rational authority for its actions or beliefs can be what it is by virtue of itself, and thus be fully real), and since this is what reality is, *we*, as seekers of knowledge and rational authority, *are the most real things that there are*. That is, we are the most real things *to the extent that* we go beyond our initial inclinations toward particular beliefs or actions – that is, to the extent that we go beyond our "finite" existence – and seek that rational authority, and thus constitute something transfinite or (to use the traditional word) divine, which gives full reality to the world of which it is the self-transcendence.

To deny that we can know *this* God would be truly a self-frustrating endeavor. And to assert that in constructing a philosophy around this thought, Hegel is making ridiculously grandiose claims, is to miss the breathtaking *simplicity* of what he is doing. Following the example of Plato, in his *Republic* and *Symposium*, Hegel is interpreting Socrates's search for knowledge of the Good – that is, for rational authority for his actions and beliefs – as capable of, in effect, creating the ultimate *reality* (since, as Plato puts it, to the extent that someone seeks such authority, it becomes "possible for him to give birth not to *images of virtue* . . . but to *true virtue*" [*Symposium* 212a; emphasis added], and to "become entirely *one*" [*Republic* 443e; emphasis added]).⁵⁴ In his famous denials that he possesses "knowledge," Socrates is certainly not denying that he knows anything about his own *search for* knowledge, or (consequently) that he knows anything about himself *as* a searcher for knowledge. What Hegel claims for his philosophy is not that it grasps and knows the possibly infinite complexities of "reality" as it's commonly thought of – that is, of *nature* – but rather that it grasps the more fundamental "reality"

⁵⁴ Obviously the interpretation of Plato that I'm gesturing towards, here, interprets the "Forms" not so much as ontologically independent (and consequently as themselves the ultimate "realities"), but more as metaphors that point to a *process* of going beyond finite starting-points – a process that could enable a finite human being to achieve "unity," as a person, and thus (as the *Symposium* quote suggests) a kind of reality that is, in effect, transfinite. This broadly Aristotelian or Hegelian "Platonism," of which I gave some more details in 2.6, would combine epistemological modesty with the dramatic metaphysical implication of a higher "reality" in which humans themselves are implicated – in Hegel's terminology, a "truly infinite" reality – in the same way that Aristotle and Hegel seem to combine them.

that is not nature, but the way in which nature can and apparently does go beyond itself in the “ought” and the search for knowledge, which is to say, in selfhood (what Hegel describes as negativity, true infinity, the Concept, and Spirit), and that this more fundamental “reality,” if it exists, knows *itself* in a way that it can hardly deny.

Hegel’s notion, in both the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the Logic, that we can follow the movement of the *Sache selbst*, the pure concepts that make up reality itself, rather than merely the movement of “our own thoughts” (which is what a skeptic might suggest that we are really following), is only plausible in the context of his argument that reality is constituted by the finite’s going beyond itself, so that we – as the ones *through whom* (that is, through whose thoughts) the finite apparently can go beyond itself – are intimately involved in the constitution of reality, and can therefore know it as well as we know ourselves.⁵⁵

That Hegel has in mind the kind of response to skepticism that I have been describing can be seen from his introductory discussion in the EL, in which he says that unlike the “understanding,” philosophy

contains the skeptical as a moment within itself – specifically as the dialectical moment. But then philosophy does not stop at the merely negative result of the dialectic, as is the case with skepticism. [Skepticism] mistakes its result, insofar as it holds fast to it as mere, i.e., abstract negation. When the dialectic has the negative as its result, then, precisely as a *result*, this negative is at the same time the *positive*, for it contains what it resulted from superseded within itself, and cannot be without it.

(EL §81A, TWA 8:176/131; emphasis added)

The negative “*result*... is at the same time the *positive*” because as a “result,” it always has (at least) the positive moment of *being*, within it (see 3.3). Skepticism is “a moment within” Hegelian philosophy in that

55 It might seem that Hegel’s argument is viciously circular, if his conception of reality and true infinity, which ensures that he has this kind of access to the pure concepts that make up reality, is itself arrived at only by *assuming* that he has this access. However, we needn’t understand the Logic as depending upon such an assumption. Instead, we can interpret it as proceeding hypothetically, interpreting our experience of talking about a topic (“being”), and our experience of questioning the authority of our inclinations (in the “Ought”), and finding that a cogent interpretation of these experiences leads us to understand ourselves as constituting, through that questioning, the highest reality that we can conceive of. Since this reality (when it’s fully developed, in the *Encyclopedia*) will contain all the distinctions between “in itself” and “for others,” essence and existence, subject and object, outer and inner, and so forth, that humans have hitherto conceived of, there is no reason for those humans to postulate something “external” to it or “truly in itself” that might differ from it and be unknown to them.

skepticism is the inquiring going-beyond, the search for rational authority, which (as the “Ought,” in the “Quality” chapter of WL) dissolves the finite, as such. But unlike skepticism as such, Hegelian “philosophy” goes on to remind itself that this search for rational authority *itself already constitutes* (together with what it dissolves) *something positive* – namely, the reality that is called true infinity – and that the way in which this reality is constituted seems to imply that it must have knowledge of itself. In this way, Hegelian philosophy transcends skepticism. By making skepticism internal to reality as such, it deprives it of its power as an independent point of view.

Hegel develops the connection between knowledge and skepticism that is implicit in true infinity, in his account of “Cognition” in the Idea (see 5.16) and in his account of subjective Spirit (including Consciousness and Intelligence) in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, in which he writes:

The action of Intelligence as theoretical Spirit has been called *cognition* [*Erkennen*]. Yet this does not mean that Intelligence *inter alia* cognizes – besides which it also intuits, represents, remembers, imagines, and so on. Such a position is . . . connected with *the great question of modern times as to whether true cognition or the cognition of truth is possible*. . . [In fact,] the concept of cognition has emerged as Intelligence itself, as the certainty [*Gewißheit*] of Reason; the actuality of Intelligence is therefore cognition itself. It follows from this that it is absurd to speak of Intelligence and yet at the same time of the *possibility* or choice of cognizing *or not*.

(EG §445, 10:242, emphasis added; compare §445A)

The only way for Hegel's analysis of “cognition” to have the kind of relevance that he here suggests it has to the question of “whether true cognition or the cognition of truth is possible” is for that analysis to be a development of a structure within which the contrast between a “mind” that engages in intuiting, etc., and a “reality” to which the mind may or may not have reliable access, makes no sense. Such a structure is presented by true infinity, in which, as I have been explaining, the fullest reality is *achieved by the inquiring mind, itself*; and Hegel's analysis of “cognition” is indeed a development of true infinity, as I will show in Chapters 5 and 6.

It is important, once again, to distinguish the epistemological position that I'm attributing to Hegel from more familiar modern positions. By saying that in knowing ourselves we know the highest reality, Hegel is *not* saying, as Bishop Berkeley does, that only “minds” and the ideas in them are real; according to Hegel, material objects are also real, to the

extent that they go beyond themselves and engage in thought. Nor is Hegel saying, like Kant, that thought “imposes” certain important features on the world of appearance, and in that sense is more fundamental than that world. In Hegel’s picture, nothing is imposed on anything by anything else; rather, certain things are *achieved* by some things (namely, by thinking things) that aren’t achieved by other things (say, by “being,” or “matter,” as such). And finally, although the argument that I’m attributing to Hegel certainly resembles Descartes’s argument for knowledge, in his *Meditations*, in the emphasis that it puts on the searcher’s *self-knowledge* – on the “cogito ergo sum” (which Hegel endorses in EL §76 and *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* /TWA 20:131–132) – Hegel’s argument differs from Descartes’s by giving reasons for regarding the searcher as more “real” than merely material, non-thinking things, so that from the point of view of Hegel’s argument, Descartes’s categorizing of both the searcher and material objects as equally “*res*,” and thus equally “real” (differing only in that one is “*res cogitans*” and the other is “*res extensa*”), promotes an unfortunate confusion. According to Hegel’s argument, by knowing ourselves – that is, by having the experience of seeking authority for our beliefs and actions – we know the ultimate reality, which is true infinity, the Concept, Spirit, and so on. The “external world” is real insofar as it helps to constitute this ultimate reality, by going beyond itself as freedom and Spirit, and to the extent that it does that (in the way that Hegel studies especially in his *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Spirit*, which I’ll discuss in Chapter 6), we know the external world, as well. Descartes’s conception of knowledge is vulnerable to skepticism, and Kant’s conception of knowledge generates skepticism (about our knowledge of things in themselves), precisely because they view important parts of reality as in polar opposition to thought, whereas Hegel has demonstrated, in “Quality,” that reality as such *is created* by something like thought (when the finite goes beyond itself), so that rather than spinning its wheels in futility, skepticism’s unlimited inquiry *creates and therefore has access to* reality.⁵⁶

56 Defending his argument that Hegel is a “realist” about the natural world – in the sense that Hegel believes that the truth about nature does not depend upon our mental states – Kenneth R. Westphal contrasts Hegel’s thesis that nothing finite is ontologically independent, which Hegel calls “idealism” and which does not conflict with what Westphal calls “realism” about nature (because finite things don’t depend on anyone’s mental states), with the “epistemologically based subjective idealism” (*Hegel’s Epistemological Realism* [Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989], p. 143) of someone like Berkeley, which *would* conflict

As I've indicated, the "idealism" that most resembles Hegel's is not a modern idealism, but Plato's. I'll discuss Hegel's idealism, and its relation to Plato's, further in Chapter 5 (especially 5.10).

To prevent possible misunderstanding, I should emphasize that the "self" that I say Hegel says we know is not something that is immediately "given," such as (for example) sensations as they are described by empiricism; and neither is it the "starting point" of Hegel's philosophical investigation. Hegel makes it clear that nothing, as he sees it, is purely "immediate," and he also makes it clear (for that reason, in fact) that the 'I' is not the starting point of his investigation in the *Logic* (see WL 5:76–79/GW 21:62–64/75–78, criticizing Fichte). This is another way in which Hegel's investigation differs from Descartes's, for which the *cogito* is, in effect, the starting point. Rather than being Hegel's *starting point*, the self, or "selfhood" as I've been calling it, is the *theme* of his investigation, from the Something through to Absolute Spirit. Philosophy's starting point is the "immediate," or being, and its theme is the way in which what is true in that starting point emerges: the way in which immediacy and mediation, the finite and the infinite, substance and subject, mechanism and the "Idea," Nature and Spirit interrelate as (the emergence of) reality or selfhood or truth. This is what Hegel means by calling true infinity the "fundamental concept of philosophy": not that true infinity is philosophy's starting point or basis, but that it is what philosophy, as a whole, *exhibits*. What philosophy exhibits is immune to skepticism not because it is an indubitable starting point or basis, but because, as I indicated earlier, it is exhibited just as much by skepticism as it is by the whole of philosophy.

3.20. Knowledge and "Faith"

If this is the situation with respect to knowledge, what is the situation with respect to "faith"? Hegel wrote in *Faith and Knowledge* (1802), his early systematic response to the fideism of Kant, Fichte, and Jacobi, that

with "realism" about nature. What Westphal doesn't notice is the way in which Hegel's account of what Hegel calls "*Realität*" gives us a *cognitive access* to that *Realität* that is more direct than our access to facts about the natural world, as such. (Accordingly, Westphal doesn't discuss the significance that Hegel attaches to Descartes's *cogito* argument.) If knowledge of God and of human beings as "Spirit" takes us beyond ourselves, as it does in both the *Logic* and the *Encyclopedia*, then the precise character of our knowledge of nature, as such, becomes a less central issue than it is for someone whose ontology makes nature the paradigm of "reality."

“in *true faith* the whole sphere of finitude, of being-something-oneself, of sensibility goes down [*versinkt*] before the *thinking and intuiting* of the eternal, which here becomes one” (TWA 2:382/141; emphasis added). Basing his own approach to the eternal on his conception of true infinity, Hegel saw no need to contrast a sphere of faith to a sphere of knowledge, and instead he identified true faith with “thinking and intuiting,” which were equivalent, for him, to reason. He takes the same position in EL (1830):

“Intuiting” and “believing” [*Glauben*] express initially the determinate representations that we associate with these words in our ordinary consciousness; it is true that in this usage, they are diverse from thinking, and everyone is more or less able to understand this distinction. But now believing and intuiting ought to be taken in a higher sense, as faith [*Glauben*] in God, as intellectual intuition of God; and this means that we are to abstract, precisely, from what constitutes the distinction between intuiting, or believing, and thinking. When they are promoted to this higher region, we cannot say how believing and intuiting are still diverse from thinking.

(EL §63R, TWA 8:151/111)

The distinction between intuiting or believing, on the one hand, and thinking, on the other, applies only in the sphere of the finite, as such. In connection with the infinite, they cease to be distinguishable, because there the *external determination* that goes with intuition or with belief as opposed to thought has been superseded (see EG §§446–449, and 6.6). External determination is superseded in thought because in the way that the discussion of knowledge in the previous section (3.19) suggests, thought is ultimately internal to selfhood (or “reality” or “God”), rather than dealing with the relation between them and something that is external to them.

Hegel goes on to point out that *sheer* “faith,” when separated from all thought, can just as well believe that “the Dalai-Lama, the bull, the ape, etc., is God” (EL §63R, TWA 8:152/112). True faith, then, is thought and is reason. To make this statement comprehensible, it is vital, of course, to be clear about what Hegel means by “thought” and by “reason.” They cannot be mere “cost-benefit calculation” – what Hegel often refers to as “the understanding” (*Verstand*). Rather, they are the questioning of everything – of what *counts* as a “benefit” or a “cost,” and why – which I first described in 2.2, which Hegel describes as “infinite,” and to which he gives the title of “reason” (*Vernunft*), in contrast to

“the understanding.” I hope that the defenders of “faith” will see, as they become better acquainted with it, that Hegel’s “reason” leads to precisely the “higher reality” that our hearts desire, so that there is no need for them to object to calling that reality “rational.” The point in calling it “rational” is that the process of seeking higher, more comprehensive reasons constitutes (in the way that I’ve been explaining) a higher reality. This higher reality is what our hearts desire because, as I will explain in Chapters 5 and 6, it has the character of *love*, as well as – and inseparably from – what Hegel calls “reason.” (The same can of course also be said for Plato’s higher reality, in “Diotima’s Speech” in the *Symposium*.)

I should also add – and this is probably the ultimate reason for Hegel’s refusal to contrast “faith” with “knowledge” – that people who define their preferred relation to God in an “exclusive” way, as the “opposite” of, or essentially *not* another way (*not*, for example, the “rational” way or the “philosopher’s” way), invite the objection that what they are doing seems paradigmatically *unfree*: that, as Hegel says, “*flight* is not a liberation from what is . . . fled from; the one that excludes still remains connected to [*in Verbindung mit*] what it excludes” (WL 5:196/GW 21:163,10–13/175; emphasis added), as the spurious infinity remains connected to the finite. The failure of flight (or “negation”) to be liberation seems to be an endemic problem in “Romantic,” anti-Enlightenment religious thinking as represented by Pascal and Kierkegaard and their intellectual descendents, as well as in religious “fundamentalism” in general. For it is not only “philosophers” who are concerned about being (truly) free or truly oneself, and who suppose that part if not all of what religion is about is – true, deep, fulfilling – freedom or being oneself (and consequently not “fleeing,” not defining oneself through what one “opposes”). Such freedom, it seems plausible to suggest, might also be precisely what “love” is about.

3.21. Earlier Versions of These Ideas, in Hegel’s Development

Hegel made the basic outline of true infinity clear in *Faith and Knowledge* (1802). There he wrote that “It is precisely through its *flight from the finite* and through its rigidity that subjectivity turns the beautiful into [mere] things – the [sacred] grove into timber” (TWA 2:290/58; emphasis added). As opposed to such a “flight,” he wrote, “the true infinite is the absolute Idea, identity of the universal and the particular, or *identity of*

the infinite and the finite themselves (i.e., of the infinite *as opposed to* a finite)" (2: 352/113; emphasis added). What he didn't make clear prior to the *Science of Logic* (1812–1816), however, is *why* the finite and the infinite are "identical" – why (as he puts it more precisely, there) "finitude is only as a *transcending* of itself" and "infinity is only as a *transcending* of the finite" (WL 5:160/GW 21:133,34–37/145–146). Indeed, Hegel probably hadn't worked these arguments out, at the time that he wrote *Faith and Knowledge*, but was still relying on the rather dogmatic *assertions* of some such "identity" that were characteristic of his influential collaborator at the time, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling. Since the arguments in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which he first makes clear his independence from Schelling, are phrased in terms of consciousness or knowledge, rather than being, as such, they don't directly address this issue. Likewise, in Hegel's important *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* from the 1820s (which have recently been newly edited and translated into English [LPR]), these arguments are presupposed, rather than laid out. So it is vital that readers who are interested in these issues and these texts should study the *Science of Logic*, as well.

Another feature of Hegel's earlier treatment of these issues that readers should be aware of is his doctrine of "intellectual intuition," or intuitive intellect. It plays a central organizing role in his *Differenzschrift* (*The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* [1801]) and in *Faith and Knowledge*, and since these essays contain some of the most extensive explicit discussions of Kant and Fichte that Hegel ever published, they are often relied on as laying down principles, regarding Kant's and Fichte's mistakes and how to overcome them, that Hegel is assumed to hold to in his later System, as well. Intellectual intuition, an idea from Spinoza that Kant entertained (in the *Critique of Judgment*, §77) as possible for God, but not for man, and that Fichte applied to the ego's self-knowledge, is given the job, in these early essays of Hegel's, of uniting the finite and the infinite. An intellectual intuition would be a mode of knowing the world that does not depend upon input provided by sense organs, and thus does not divide knowledge into conceptual ingredients, on the one hand, and sensation, on the other. Hegel is delighted that Kant came as close as he did, by discussing this idea in the *Critique of Judgment*, to overcoming the dualism of concept versus intuition of his earlier Critiques (and also, by implication, the dualism of the infinite versus the finite), and he is correspondingly dismayed by

Kant's conclusion that *humans* have no access to the faculty that could do this (FK 2:324–326/88–90).⁵⁷

At some point after he published these essays, however, Hegel became aware that it wasn't enough to assert the existence of this miraculous faculty or of the unity that it gives one access to – that a rigorous philosophy would *argue for* that unity, from premises that other people could be expected to accept. So in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he objects to “the rapturous enthusiasm that, like a shot from a pistol, begins straight away with absolute knowledge, and makes short work of other standpoints by declaring that it takes no notice of them” (3:31/16, §27), and in the introduction to Book One of the *Science of Logic*, he contrasts his approach to that of “those who begin, like a shot from a pistol, from their inner revelation, from faith, *intellectual intuition*, etc., and who would be exempt from method and logic” (WL 5:65–66/GW 21:53.34–1/67; emphasis added). What remains of his earlier position, here, is the idea of the unity of finite and infinite in true infinity; but this unity now must be *demonstrated*, by the argument that we have been studying here, rather than taken for granted as a starting point. It is true that in the *Encyclopedia Logic* (§55R), Hegel still mentions “intuitive intellect” as a positive feature of Kantian philosophy, but his thought here, no doubt – as also in EL §63R, quoted in 3.20, and in WL 6:266/GW 12:26,28–32/593 – is that (as in Spinoza, Fichte, and Schelling, as well) the idea of the intuitive intellect is preferable to empiricist or dualistic views, even if, taken by itself, it is still inadequate. Hegel's mature view, in the *Encyclopedia*, is that Intelligence's “faculties” all interlock, as developments of Spirit (and thus ultimately of true infinity), so that no single faculty, such as the supposed faculty of intellectual intuition, could solve a fundamental problem by itself.

In addition to its dogmatism, another disadvantage of Hegel's early Schellingian advocacy of intellectual intuition was that it did not bring out clearly the intimate way in which true infinity, and knowledge of it, depends upon the *finite*, and knowledge of *it*. Hegel and Schelling *intended* to make a point of this sort by emphasizing (contrary to Kant and Fichte) the way in which, as Hegel and Schelling claim, *nature* is itself rational, and thus has a quality that links it to the infinite. This left it unclear how (if at all) freedom and infinity were *distinct from* nature. Hegel's argument in the *Logic* for the failure of the finite to

57 I will say more about Kant's dualism of concept versus intuition in Chapter 4, in connection with Essence.

achieve “reality,” and its consequent need for the infinite as the only way by which it can be real – his argument that “finitude *is* only as a *transcending* of itself” – makes it clear how and why nature and freedom, the finite and the infinite, are distinct and at the same time interlocked, and thus why the notion of the infinite, when it is properly understood, need not be seen as a “*flight from* the finite” (FK 2:290/58) (that is, as a sheer supernaturalism).⁵⁸

The “intuitive intellect” was important, in the *Differenzschrift* and especially in *Faith and Knowledge*, as an alternative to Kant’s notion that knowledge had two ingredients that are in principle separate: “concepts” and “intuitions.” From this doctrine, Kant inferred that we cannot have knowledge of objects of which (as he thought) we cannot have intuitions, such as freedom and God. Since Hegel’s argument for true infinity implies both that the finite things that ordinary sciences claim to know are less real than infinite things such as freedom and God, and that we can have *knowledge* of the latter through arguments such as the one that Hegel is presenting, it clearly raises questions about Kant’s

58 Commenting on Hegel’s argument in EL §60R that to relate to something as a “limitation” is already, in a sense, to have gone beyond it, Paul Guyer interprets Hegel as trying “to suggest that Kant cannot merely appeal to the idea of an intuitive intellect to bring out the limits of our own discursive intellect, but must concede its reality in the very attempt to place any limits upon our own intellect.” To which Guyer objects that “it simply is not true that one must recognize the existence of something that does not have a certain property in order to conceive of that property as a defect or limit” (“Thought and Being: Hegel’s Critique of Kant’s Theoretical Philosophy,” in F. Beiser, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], p. 204). So one cannot argue from the acknowledged limitedness of one faculty to the existence of a faculty that lacks that limit. Besides overlooking Hegel’s changed attitude toward intellectual intuition, in his mature system, however, Guyer here is also overlooking the way in which Hegel’s overall argument (to part of which [see 3.6] this treatment of “limitation,” in EL §60R, alludes) does not proceed from the existence of something that is limited, to the existence of something else that is unlimited, but rather from the untenability of the concept of a limited being to the need for such beings to *go beyond themselves*. The argument that Guyer imputes to Hegel involves a dualism and a supernaturalism that Hegel’s actual argument avoids, and by avoiding them, Hegel’s actual argument makes itself considerably more plausible than absolute idealism sounds in the depiction of it that Guyer draws from Hegel’s early essays. (The other feature of Hegel’s argument that Guyer misses is how Hegel draws on the conceptions of obligation and autonomy – the “ought” and the perception of one’s finite “limitation” – in Kant’s ethical theory to make plausible his notion of the finite thing’s “going beyond itself.”) Guyer’s limitation of his discussion, in this important and challenging paper, to what Hegel articulates “within the confines of his explicit discussions of Kant” (p. 172), prevents him from identifying important features of Hegel’s actual argument in the EL (and the WL). I discuss the issue of the concept/intuition relationship, on which Guyer properly focusses most of his attention, in 4.7.

conclusion regarding what we can know. By doing so, it suggests (as Hegel's earlier advocacy of "intellectual intuition" had also suggested) that Kant's dualism of intuition and concept is open to question. Hegel explores this particular issue later on, in the Doctrine of Essence and the *Philosophy of Spirit*, and I will discuss it in Chapters 4 and 6.

3.22. Charles Taylor's Interpretation of True Infinity

In his admirably energetic and provocative *Hegel*, which for a quarter of a century has been the most accessible and influential interpretation in English of Hegel's system as a whole, Charles Taylor interprets true infinity in a way that contrasts with the interpretation that I have been advocating. According to one of the central theses of Taylor's interpretation of Hegel, Hegel sees individual humans as "vehicles" for the embodiment of "cosmic spirit" (*Hegel*, p. 89), or of a "cosmic reason" (p. 562). True infinity, Taylor also writes, is "an infinite life embodied in a circle of finite beings, each of which is *inadequate to it* and therefore goes under, but is replaced in necessary order by another" (p. 240; emphasis added). Thus, cosmic spirit, cosmic reason, or true infinity – Taylor treats them as largely interchangeable – evidently stands by itself, as the standard that finite things try and fail to live up to, or as the agent that uses finite things as its vehicle. The result of these metaphors of the "vehicle" or the external standard is that Taylor's account fails to articulate the *unity* or *identity* of the finite with the infinite. Of course, Taylor is well aware that Hegel *intends* such a unity, but because Taylor doesn't get the arguments by which Hegel actually *accomplishes* it into focus, Taylor's own metaphors – the "vehicle" and the unreachable standard – end up taking over his presentation.⁵⁹ The arguments that Taylor doesn't get into focus are Hegel's arguments for the failures of the "something," the finite, and spurious infinity to achieve reality – the arguments that I analyzed in 3.4 and 3.6–3.9, and that Taylor discusses in his Chapter X, Part I. Hegel himself condenses these three arguments together in a passage in the EL that seems to be one of Taylor's central pieces of

59 Taylor says that, for Hegel, Spirit *needs* the finite in order to be embodied and aware of itself (*Hegel*, p. 89). But this is still an external, means/end relationship, in which Spirit is (as Hegel would say) a "power existing outside" the finite (WL 5:160/GW 21:133.40–1/146), which uses the finite as a means by which to become embodied and aware of itself. Whereas true infinity, as Hegel actually describes it, "*is only as a transcending of the finite*" (WL 5:160/GW 21:133.36–37/145–146): not only its embodiment and self-awareness, but its sheer existence depends upon the finite.

evidence for his interpretation of true infinity (he cites part of it on p. 241):

What is indeed given is that something becomes an other. . . . In its relationship to an other, something is already an other itself vis-à-vis the latter; and therefore, since what it passes into (*übergeht in*) is entirely the same as what passes into it – neither having any further determination than this identical one of being an *other* – in its passing into an other, something only goes together with itself; and this relation to itself in the passing and the other is true infinity.

(EL §95)

Taylor interprets this passage as suggesting that

if we contemplate the succession of finite things where each passes and is succeeded by another, we are eventually forced to shift our point of reference from the particular ephemeral finite things to the continuing process which goes on through their coming to be and passing away

(Hegel, p. 241)

which is true infinity. The interpretation of Hegel's account of quality and finitude that I have been laying out suggests, on the contrary, that the "becoming" or "passing *into*" that Hegel is discussing here is not the physical process of the something's ceasing to exist and the other's coming into existence. Rather, it is the logical dependence of the something on others for its determinate quality, which I described in 3.4. Something "becomes" or "passes into" an other in the sense that something's quality is not just a fact about it, but depends upon other somethings, so that its nature, as a finite thing, does not depend on it, alone, but depends instead upon the conceptual space that is composed of all the others that there are. In EL §94, Hegel describes the futile process of seeking to determine the something's quality definitively by listing and encompassing all the "others" upon which its quality logically depends, and upon which the others in turn depend, and so on *ad infinitum*. This, of course, is an instance of "spurious infinity," because it yields only an endless progress, and does not transcend or resolve the problem. Whereas in EL §95, which we're looking at now, Hegel is saying that since the *other* depends, for its quality, upon the *something* in the same way that the something depends upon the other, therefore in thinking about this complex of something and other, both of them facing exactly the same problem, one's attention can be drawn to the potential selfhood of each of them – in which case one could say,

as Hegel does, that each of them “goes together with itself.” But what this means is that the transcendence of the self/other dependency, if it occurs, will occur right in the finite something, by its successfully being itself, rather than through its somehow encompassing all of its (infinitely ramifying) relationships – and still less through our shifting our point of reference *away from* the particular ephemeral finite something to a continuing process of which it is merely a vehicle. So where Taylor suggests that “we are eventually forced to shift our central point of reference from the particular ephemeral finite things to the continuing process which goes on through their coming to be and passing away” (*Hegel*, p. 241), I suggest that rather than shifting our central point of reference away from the ephemeral finite thing, we shift it, precisely, to the potential *selfhood* of that thing – to its having its quality by virtue of itself – which Hegel has been in pursuit of ever since he introduced the idea of “quality.” Besides being a more literal interpretation of Hegel’s statement that the something “goes together with itself,” in true infinity, my interpretation gives a simple and unambiguous meaning to Hegel’s previous and closely connected account of the role of “negation” in quality (see note 9).

Though Taylor’s description of individual humans as “vehicles” for the embodiment of cosmic “spirit” doesn’t completely misrepresent Hegel, because “spirit” does transcend individual humans, it does systematically overlook the fact that spirit does this only through the individual’s own transcendence of her finite condition in pursuit of *her own* selfhood and reality – that is, it overlooks the side of Hegel’s true infinity that is critical of “transcendence” as the “power outside” the finite, or as the “beyond.” It is vital to see that at the beginning of his systematic account of freedom, and in the true infinity, in particular, Hegel’s focus is on the individual’s pursuit of her own reality, and not on the other, top-down, “God’s-eye view.”⁶⁰ The key to understanding Hegel’s conception of true infinity in this way is seeing that his critique of Kant and Fichte, for allowing freedom to become mired

60 Errol E. Harris argues with Taylor in some detail in his *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), particularly pp. 106–107 on “alteration,” but I find his account of Hegel’s argument too wrapped up in terminological details to effectively counter Taylor’s overall interpretation. The numerous other commentators, such as Pippin (see note 14), who are attempting to interpret the *Logic* and the *System* very differently from the way Taylor interprets them, generally do not address Taylor’s interpretations of specific passages in Hegel’s texts, so that their disagreement with Taylor doesn’t come to grips with him in a way that would help readers to really evaluate it.

in “spurious infinity,” overlies a fundamental *agreement* with Kant and Fichte about the importance of freedom as transcending finitude. If we keep this agreement in view, it will be difficult for us to suppose that Hegel locates freedom fundamentally in something other than the individual finite being that is seeking to be what it is by virtue of itself.⁶¹ What is *true* in Taylor’s interpretation is that for Hegel, finite beings fail to be real, and must go beyond themselves to be real – and that Hegel’s category of “Spirit” (*Geist*) embodies that going-beyond. What is mistaken in Taylor’s reading and in many others like it (an early and even more influential instance being Ludwig Feuerbach’s reading) is the idea that Hegel sees the existence of this *Geist* as itself *unproblematic*; whereas in fact Hegel’s account of true infinity makes it clear that infinity (and its successors, including the Idea and *Geist*) depends upon finite things’ going beyond themselves, just as much as the reality of finite things depends upon infinity.

It is easy to suppose that the only way to take Hegel’s theological language and interests seriously is to assume, as Taylor and Feuerbach do, that God (or *Geist*) for Hegel is the primary reality, whose existence is not an issue in the way that the existence of finite things like ourselves is an issue. To suppose this, however, is to overlook the lesson of Hegel’s critique of spurious infinity, that if two things are simply opposed to each other (as “God” and “finite things” are opposed to each other in this Taylor/Feuerbach way of reading Hegel), they are both rendered finite by that opposition. *Geist* cannot be simply other than us, opposed to us (as it would have to be if it “used” us as its “vehicles”), on pain of being finite, itself. It is also true that *we* cannot be simply other than *it* – we cannot be simply finite – on pain of being unreal. And it is *also* true that despite this absence of simple otherness between the finite and the infinite – an absence that Hegel tentatively describes as their “unity,” and eventually as their “identity” – there must be, and is, a significant *difference* between finite and infinite, in order for this whole issue of their

61 The free will is the model instance, for Hegel as for Kant, in which a being goes together with itself, rather than being determined by its relation to others. But in this chapter of his book, Taylor refers to the “ought” only as something that Hegel introduces “in order to allow a reference to the *errors* of Kant and Fichte” (*Hegel*, p. 239; emphasis added). Guyer, too, in “Hegel, Leibniz and the Contradiction in the Finite” (cited in note 2), seems to neglect Hegel’s principle that “infinity *is* only as a transcending of the finite” when he interprets Hegel as simply *denying* the multiplicity of independent substances that is assumed by Leibniz and by common sense (“from this viewpoint, *there is no such thing* as the posited independence of individual substances” [p. 96; emphasis added]), rather than as superseding it.

relationship of “unity” or identity to arise. This mutual dependence or identity-in-difference of finite and infinite, which is required for their (“truly infinite”) reality, is what we must understand in order to see how Hegel supersedes both traditional theism and traditional atheism, finding some real truth in each of them but also definitively going beyond each of them, and (thus) beyond the opposition between them (in the way that I outlined in 3.17).

As a result of the effective *non*-identity of the finite with the infinite, as Taylor understands them using his metaphors of the “vehicle” and the unreachable standard, he is able to conclude, in the manner of Enlightenment critics of transcendence, that modern science and technology have “dispelled [the] vision of the world as the manifestation of spiritual powers or a divine principle” (*Hegel*, p. 545) – the vision of which Hegel’s theory of true infinity and Spirit, as Taylor understands it, was a representative – and consequently that “Hegel’s central thesis is dead” (p. 546). If, however, Taylor had gotten into focus the “unity” or identity of the finite and the infinite, as Hegel understands them, and the arguments that support that unity or identity, he would not have been able to understand the “manifestation” relationship as a relationship between one thing and another, independent thing, and it would have become evident to him that further argument would be needed in order to show that the first thing (the “spiritual powers or divine principle”) could be “dispelled” by the progress of science and technology, without depriving the second thing (nature) of its full reality.⁶²

3.23. Hegel Not an Atomist

It might be mistakenly inferred from my critique of Taylor’s interpretation of true infinity that I think that Hegel does not regard free agents as logically involved with one another – that Hegel’s position is “atomistic.” Such a view of Hegel could hardly be reconciled with the Logic’s

62 Besides the progress of science and technology, the other experience that Taylor thinks has made Hegel’s central thesis “dead” is the horrors of the twentieth century’s totalitarianisms, world wars, and so on. He thinks that Hegel’s philosophy of history expressed a “sense that the horrors and nightmares of history . . . were behind us” (p. 545), which subsequent experience has clearly shown not to be the case. But Hegel nowhere implies that history will contain no further horrors – only that it will contain no lasting social and conceptual transformation comparable to the one that he saw accomplished through the French Revolution. And the latter claim, as far as I can see, has not been in any way refuted by the experience of the twentieth century.

Doctrine of the Concept, with the *Philosophy of Spirit*, or with the *Philosophy of Right*, but in any case it does not follow from my interpretation of true infinity. The point is that the logical relationship between free agents is established, not in the Doctrine of Being, but in the Doctrine of Essence and the Doctrine of the Concept. Hegel proceeds, after the part of “Quality” that we have been studying, to introduce the category of “being-for-self,” which is the embodiment of true infinity, and then to describe how being-for-self “collapses” (WL 5: 182/GW 21:151,27/163) into simple immediacy, which is embodied in the world-view that Hegel calls “atomism.” Hegel takes this “atomism” very seriously, and I think it might be correct to say that his ultimate answer to it takes up much of the remainder of the Logic and of the *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Spirit*. He clearly does not regard his discussion (in “Quality”) of the mutual involvement of determinate beings, through “negation,” as an adequate answer to atomism, or he could have saved himself a great deal of work. A crucial fact about his final overcoming of atomism, in the Concept and in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, is that the Concept and Spirit embody the same sort of freedom that Hegel has begun to analyze in true infinity. They embody, in other words, Hegel’s version of Kantian “self-transcending” being. (But they embody it on a stronger basis than it had in “Quality”: one that isn’t prone to “collapse.”) That is why, despite all of his criticism of Kant, Hegel is best understood as attempting to *rescue* Kant’s basic conception of freedom – by reconceiving its relation to being and (thus) to nature – rather than to put something completely different in its place. Indeed, Hegel also rescues Kant’s *theism* – again, by reconceiving God’s relation to being and nature. And finally, through his refutation of “atomism” and his arguments for the Absolute Idea and for mutual “recognition,” Hegel also rescues Kant’s great argument for the thesis that autonomy requires ethics (see 2.7–2.8, 5.14–5.17, and 6.5.1). Whether Kant would want his arguments for freedom, God, and ethics to be rescued *in this way* is less important than whether there is any other convincing way of rescuing them, which is a question that I leave to the reader to consider.

3.24. Being-for-Self and the “Collapse” of True Infinity

A natural question to ask, after one has assimilated the transition from determinate being to true infinity and ideality, would be, “What form will numerical multiplicity, and the relations between multiple things, take in this new world?” If things no longer get their identity purely

through the negation that distinguishes them from other occupants of the same conceptual space, insofar as they now transcend the qualities that tie them to that conceptual space, how will they be distinguished from and related to one another? Another natural and even more pressing question to ask is, "How can we identify the workings of true infinity in the world?" How does the process of transcendence relate to the world of particular determinate beings and qualities that is studied (presumably) by the physical sciences? Is it "in" the world in the way that they are? What is a "world," anyway? These are, in fact, among the next questions that Hegel takes up, and they lead him initially – via the "collapse" that I mentioned in the previous section (3.23) – to a model of individuality, multiplicity, and freedom that has been and continues to be very influential in philosophy and the social sciences: to (material or social) atomism.

We begin with the notion of truly infinite being. The term that Hegel introduces to describe it is "being-for-self" (*Fürsichsein*). This term is meant to sum up the way in which the transcendence of finite being was motivated by the something's need to be in charge of its own quality – to "be itself," as opposed to being only a "member" of a conceptually structured universe. "We say that something is for itself," Hegel says, "insofar as it transcends otherness, its connection and community with other, has repelled them and made abstraction from them" (WL 5:175/GW 21:145,34–36/158). This involves transcending all finite qualities, since as limitations they involve it with other. In order to be infinite *being*, however, being-for-self must still involve being, in some fashion ("determinate being is at the same time also a moment of being-for-self" [WL 5:176/GW 21:146,6–7/159]). How can being-for-self involve determinate being without becoming involved with a finite other, and thus again becoming finite, itself? It can do so by having a moment, an ingredient, of determinate being *within itself*. Such a moment or ingredient Hegel calls "being-for-one" (WL 5:176/GW 21:146,12/159), since it constitutes the unity, the oneness of finite and infinite (or, equivalently, of something and its other [EL §97A]), in the being-for-self. Insofar as the one "for" which being-for-self is, is only being-for-self itself, there is no "other" involved, so that determinate being has been *superseded*, and does not constitute a limitation for being-for-self, or render it finite. But the oneness nevertheless gives determinate being a role as a moment within being-for-self.

This approach may sound as though it might have potential, but Hegel immediately raises a problem for it, which I will quote and

explain in some detail because it motivates the crucial transition to atomism.⁶³

Now though this moment has been designated as *being-for-one*, there is as yet nothing present *for which* it would be – no *one*, of which it would be the moment (1). There is, in fact, nothing of the kind as yet fixed in being-for-self; that *for which* something (and here there is no something) would be, whatever the other side as such might be, is likewise [so far, only] a moment, is itself only a being-for-one, not yet a one. Consequently, . . . there is only *one* being-for-other, and because there is only one, this too is *only* a being-for-one; there is only the *one* ideality of that, for which or in which a moment is supposed to be determined, *and* of that which is supposed to be a moment *in* it (2).

(WL 5:176/GW 21:147,18–31/159; emphases altered, reference numbers added)

From these considerations, which I will interpret in a moment, Hegel concludes that

the moments of being-for-self have collapsed into the *undifferentiatedness* which is immediacy or being . . . and since in this immediacy [being-for-self's] inner meaning vanishes, it is the wholly abstract limit of itself – the *one* (WL 5:182/GW 21:151,26–33/163). The ideality of being-for-self as a totality thus reverts, initially, to *reality*, and that too in its most fixed, abstract form, as the *one* (3) (WL 5:183/GW 21:151,27–30/164). The one in this form of determinate being is the stage of the category which made its appearance with the ancients as the atomistic principle . . . (WL 5:184/GW 21:153,21–23/165–166). [And finally:] Self-subsistence, pushed to the point of the one that is being-for-self, is abstract, formal, and destroys itself (4). It is the supreme, most stubborn error, which takes itself for the highest truth, manifesting in more concrete forms as abstract freedom, pure ego and, further, as *evil* (5).

(WL 5:192/GW 21:160,31–36/172; emphasis and numbers added)

⁶³ Hegel anticipates the conclusion of the passage that I am about to quote – that being-for-self in practice loses all of the internal articulation that it might have brought with it from the true infinity, and “collapses into undifferentiatedness” (WL 5:182/GW 21:151,26–27/163) – in his initial descriptions of being-for-self as “simple self-relation” (WL 5:174/GW 21:144,16–17/157) and as “collapsed into simple being” (WL 5:176/GW 21:146,33/158). But it seems clear that the detailed argument that I am about to quote is his explanation of why this collapse and simplicity come about, which is something that commentators who overlook this argument have difficulty explaining. See, for example, Giacomo Rinaldi, *A History and Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1992), pp. 157–158 and 309–310, and Clark Butler, *Hegel's Logic*, p. 77.

I will return to these very interesting consequences after I have interpreted Hegel's initial argument [(1)–(2)] for being-for-self's "collapse" into undifferentiatedness. He says that in order for "being-for-one" to be a moment, an ingredient, in being-for-self (so that determinate being can be within being-for-self, and thus not limit it from outside and reduce it to finitude), a "one" or a unity must be *present*, for the moment or ingredient to relate to – for it to be a moment *of* (1). But there is no such one or unity present until the two distinct moments are present: both the infinite, and the finite determinate being – the being-for-one – that is supposed to be united with it. And these two moments are not present as *distinct* moments, Hegel points out, *until* the finite determinate being has in fact gone beyond itself into the "one," or until the infinite has in fact been produced (as "one" with the finite) *by* the finite's going beyond itself. Having given up the model of the spurious infinite, for which finite and infinite are inherently and permanently distinct, we can only understand finite and infinite as distinct *moments* from the point of view of the accomplished being-for-self or infinite being. But that means that we must presuppose the accomplished being-for-self or infinite being, in order merely to understand or conceive of its moments or ingredients. And that means that being-for-one, the moment that was supposed to help us to understand how being-for-self is *possible* (how we can have an infinite *being*, which doesn't forfeit its infinitude as a result of the being with which it's involved), cannot perform that function for us, because its own intelligibility depends on that of being-for-self itself (2).

The way I read this passage, then, Hegel is saying that we can't simply assume the internal intelligibility of being-for-self, as a combination of determinate being and transcendence. We have to find a starting point from which thought can, as it were, work its way into an understanding of the combination. But neither of the available starting points, which are the true infinity, on the one hand, and the finite being-for-one, on the other, can do the job, because it's only within the already accomplished infinite being that they have the proper significance. Since they aren't separately identifiable, the moments of being-for-self "collapse" and its ideality "reverts . . . to reality . . . in its most fixed, abstract form, as the *one*": All that is left of the embodied true infinity, being-for-self, is the idea of the one (3). (How this idea "destroys itself" (4), at least initially, I will explain in 3.26 and further in Chapter 5.)

If this is what Hegel is saying, then it seems to me that his whole subsequent discussion of atomism, and, indeed, of quantity and measure

(the second and final parts of the Doctrine of Being), into which his discussion of atomism flows, all of which might otherwise seem like a large uncalled-for detour motivated merely by a desire to polemicize against certain forms of scientific and mathematical thinking, can be seen instead as a systematically motivated exploration of a very real phenomenon in thought and history – one with which we have already made some acquaintance in Chapter 2, in Hobbes and Gauthier. This phenomenon is the “rational-choice” conception of the free agent, together with the atomistic conceptions of identity and physical existence within which that conception is at home (and of which Hegel thinks that evil is a form that is irresistible from within such theories – though of course not a form that is endorsed by all who endorse the theories).⁶⁴ Hegel’s interest in this phenomenon is systematic in that he grants that these conceptions of the agent and of identity and physical existence represent, not just wrong-headedness, but something of genuine philosophical importance, which is the difficulty of gaining access, from the initial notion of freedom that is embodied in the true infinity, to an understanding of the world as embodying that true infinity in concrete ways. An acceptance of social atomism, such as is very common in present-day philosophy and social science, can therefore be a symptom of a perfectly genuine intellectual (as well as, quite possibly, spiritual) problem.⁶⁵ This difficulty of gaining access to an understanding of the world as embodying true infinity is what Hegel has identified in the passage about being-for-self that I have been interpreting, and he clearly regards it as very real.⁶⁶ It might not be an exaggeration to say that it is the

64 Hegel’s discussions of atomism, quantity, and measure seem to be viewed as a large, systematically uncalled-for detour by Charles Taylor, in his *Hegel*, pp. 244–246. It is particularly unfortunate that Taylor, who himself has important things to say (in this book and elsewhere) about the modern tendency towards social atomism, does not grasp what Hegel seems to be saying, in his *Logic*, about the conceptual roots of that tendency.

65 I say that this intellectual problem may “quite possibly” also constitute a spiritual problem, rather than that it will necessarily constitute such a problem, because of the great gap that often exists, perhaps especially in our times, between an individual’s intellectual commitments and her ethical or spiritual commitments.

66 Clark Butler describes the genesis of the “one” as a “willful exclusion of what is clearly present within the dialectically constructed concrete totality of being-for-self,” and thus as “a knowing and deliberate plunge into falsehood,” comparable to the biblical “Fall” (*Hegel’s Logic*, pp. 77 and 80). If this were correct, surely Hegel should give some account of what it is that performs this willful act. But of course he doesn’t reach the “will,” as such, until much later in his system. It’s unquestionably true that what Hegel is analyzing here is closely connected to his project of explaining the nature of evil and its relation

central challenge that the Logic is meant to meet, and which it does not fully meet until it reaches the Concept and the Idea. That it manifests itself as abstract freedom and as "evil" (WL 5:192/GW 21:160,36/172, quoted above (5)), suggests the seriousness with which Hegel takes this challenge. In the next section, I will examine Hegel's explicit account of atomism, as it emerges from his discussion of being-for-self.

Before proceeding to Hegel's account of atomism, I should add that if you wonder whether Hegel has in fact gotten to the bottom of the issue about the internal intelligibility of being-for-self, as a combination of determinate being and transcendence, that I take him to be posing in WL 5:176/GW 21:147,18–31/159 (2), I think you are not alone. I think Hegel himself suspects that this problem reflects, in part, an inadequate grasp of the real nature of immediacy and mediation, which are concepts that have played a major role in the whole derivation of the concept of true infinity (and thus of being-for-self), which was guided by the need to find some kind of immediacy for quality, in the face of the assault of "negation." Hegel, in fact, plans to rethink the notions of immediacy and mediation in a thorough-going way, in the Doctrine of Essence, and this rethinking will be an important part of his strategy for resolving the problem about the intelligibility of being-for-self that he raises here. I will discuss this rethinking in the next chapter.

3.25. Atomism

The first thing to note is that the "collapsed" being-for-self that "is immediacy or being" is not *simply* immediacy but is "an immediacy based on the negating that is posited as its determination" (WL 5:182/GW 21:151,27–30/163). The negating that Hegel refers to here is, in fact, a negating of the negation that was involved in determinate being itself. This negating is a transcending of the finite quality (based on negation in the sense of membership in a conceptual space) that prevented determinate being from being, as I put it, fully "itself," and thus

to freedom and the will. But we need to understand his present analysis in the terms that he considers appropriate to it, rather than importing "more concrete" developments (WL 5:192/GW 21:160,34/172), or we won't see how his present analysis is supposed to illuminate the later developments. And in fact Hegel seems to be explaining precisely why the genesis of the "one" is *not* "willful," at this point in the dialectical development, but rather represents a genuine, so far unsolved intellectual problem. He is expressing genuine respect – a respect that I think (as part of being "with ourselves in the other") we ourselves should emulate – for theories such as those of Epicurus and Hobbes.

this negating, and the being-for-self that is based on it, still aims at the freedom, the opportunity for the thing to be itself, that was arrived at in the true infinity. All that it lacks, due to the “collapse into undifferentiatedness” that results from the problem that I analyzed in the preceding section (3.24), is the internal articulation, into transcendence (on the one hand) and determinate being (on the other), that would enable it and us to see *how* this freedom is combined with determinate being. But there is no question that freedom is still, somehow, what this “collapsed” being-for-self is about. Otherwise, it wouldn’t deserve at all the names of being-for-self or of *infinite* being (which is what being-for-self is supposed to be).

At the same time, the “collapse” takes being-for-self back – “initially,” as Hegel says, so as to leave room for the further developments in the rest of the Logic – all the way to “reality” (WL 5:183/GW 21:151,29/164).⁶⁷ That is, through the collapse, being-for-self loses its “ideality,” which is precisely the characteristic of being itself by transcending the determination by otherness that is characteristic of determinate being. So the freedom that (as we might say) it “intends” to have – and Hegel, as I’ve just been explaining, gives it more than full credit for this intention – it does not achieve. So this intermediate phenomenon, neither fish nor fowl, is quite paradoxical. Here it is appropriate to remember Hegel’s description of freedom as “arbitrariness,” in PR §15: “arbitrariness is contingency in the shape of will”: it is something that isn’t really will at all, which is presented as a candidate for the status of will. The same thing is true of what is being presented, here, as infinite, though it lacks the internal differentiation that would qualify it as infinite. The language that is employed implies a claim, which the phenomenon itself can’t fulfil.

Hegel describes this collapsed being-for-self as the “one,” and argues that since its determinate being and its vocation of infinite negation now oppose one another (and since being-for-self currently lacks the ability to hold these opposed moments together), the “one” “excludes” the negative vocation, “as other, from itself,” so that what’s left in the one is unalterable (WL 5:183/GW 21:152,8 – 12/164). Since “in this simple immediacy the mediation of determinate being and of ideality itself, and

67 Here we can safely assume Hegel is referring to the “reality” that is a moment of Quality (WL 5:118/GW 21:98,30/111), rather than to the “reality in a higher sense” (WL 5:164–5/GW 21:136,7/149) that is achieved through true infinity. I explained the difference between these in 3.16.

with it all difference and manifoldness, has vanished, [t]here is nothing in" the one, so its quality, Hegel says, is "the void" (WL 5:184/GW 21:152,22–32/165), and thus it presents us with the dual elements of ancient Greek atomism: the atom (the "uncuttable," or unalterable) and the void. Since the "one," as collapsed being-for-self, is something that is (*ein Seiendes* [WL 5:187/GW 21:155,23–29/167]), but at the same time, as the heir to the true infinity and being-for-self, it has a negative relation to itself, it must – since this is what negation means in the sphere of things that are – be distinguishable into a determinate being and its other. Since these will be side-by-side, rather than superseded in an articulated infinity, and since each of them will generate more others, by the same process, "the one is . . . a becoming of many ones" (*ibid.*): The atoms, as it were, "multiply," by a process that Hegel figuratively describes as "repulsion."

Hegel notes that the doctrines of the Greek atomists don't correspond exactly to what he is extracting from collapsed being-for-self, in particular because of the atomists' tendency to picture atoms and the void as existing "alongside" one another, their talk of the "composition" of natural objects from atoms, and their hypotheses about the atoms' shape, position, and direction of movement, hypotheses that Hegel describes as "arbitrary and external enough" (WL 5:185–186/GW 21:154,36/166–167). All of these features would be inappropriate, in Hegel's view, since they imply a relationship to space, or at any rate to the whole/part relationship, both of which are considerably more concrete than being-for-self, requiring further conceptual development, which atomism, as such, does not provide, so that an initial expression of being-for-self – which Hegel takes to be the underlying motivation of atomism – should, in principle, be formulated without reference to them. Presumably he would explain these distracting developments in Greek atomism as resulting from the tendency of pictorial thinking not only to ignore the necessity of systematic conceptual development, but also to elaborate itself in unessential ways that distract attention from the underlying thought.

Turning, then, to what Hegel takes to be the genuine, underlying relationship between atomism and being-for-self: Hegel doesn't specifically note that (perhaps unlike their great non-atomist forebear, Parmenides, against whom they were probably reacting) there is no evidence that the Greek atomists acknowledged any connection at all between their elements – the atoms and the void – on the one hand,

and thought or selfhood or the will, on the other, which are the sort of phenomena that we are likely to associate with being-for-self. By connecting infinitude with the void, over against the finite and unchangeable atoms, and omitting both the conceptual space of determinate “quality” (with its built-in “negation”) and the negation of that negation that is transcendence, the atomists might seem to eliminate the possibility of being-for-self altogether. This should not be surprising, however, if Hegel is correct in thinking that what they are describing is, in fact, a “*collapsed*” version of being-for-self, one in which infinity as transcendence, and thought and the will understood as having the potential for transcendence, are no longer in the picture.

What is still in the picture, and what leads Hegel to connect atomism with (collapsed) being-for-self despite the atomists’ exclusion of negation and transcendence, is: (1) the self, and (2) the void. Regarding (1): “The one in its own self,” he says, “simply *is*. . . It is indeterminate but not, however, in the way that being is indeterminate; its indeterminateness is the determinateness which is a relation to its own self, an absolute determinedness – posited being-within-self” (WL 5:183/GW 21:152,8–16/164–165). That is, despite its qualitative indeterminacy, there is one definite, even “absolute,” feature of this one, which is its focus on – its “relation to” or “being-within” – itself. (Is there a stronger statement in Kierkegaard, Heidegger, or Sartre of the principle that “existence precedes essence”?) What Hegel is suggesting is that the permanence of the individual atoms, their unchangeability, is something that we take seriously, as an ultimate explanatory hypothesis, because of our familiarity with selfhood in its more ambitious, less “collapsed,” forms, whether as self-consciousness or simply as the goal of what I called the thing’s “being itself,” which Hegel has suggested that we impute to (eventually self-transcending) finite beings. Something like this goal of being itself must be at work in order to preserve the atoms forever *as* themselves. We shouldn’t simply assume – though atomism does seem simply to assume – that what there is is self-preserving identical things. If there is a *reason* to assume this, it is the compellingness, for us, of the idea that everything seeks to “be itself.” That, of course, is the idea that Hegel’s whole analysis of quality (including determinate being and transcendence) has traded on. And he is proposing that it may be the best available explanation and justification of atomism’s assumption of self-preserving identical things. If he is right about this, there is indeed a significant connection between atomism and the ideas that lie behind being-for-self.

(2) The second feature of atomism that Hegel connects with being-for-self is the "void." He praises the atomists for recognizing the void as the source of movement, not via the trivial thought that nothing can move without having space to move into, but via "the profounder thought that in the negative as such there lies the ground of becoming, of the unrest of self-movement. . . . The void is the ground of movement only as the negative relation of the one to its negative, . . . that is to itself. . . . posited as having determinate being" (WL 5:186/GW 21:154,26–33/166–167). The void in this sense obviously isn't something that lies alongside the atoms, in space. Rather, it is – as Hegel's argument indicated – the "one"'s quality of lacking all difference and manifoldness, which clearly undermines whatever determinate being the one may (temporarily) be posited as having. Such a quality will indeed lead to motion, in the broadest sense of change, at least by eliminating the basis of any qualitative fixity. But the general point here is that atomism represents (collapsed) being-for-self in so far as it describes entities not as having determinate, ongoing qualities but rather as acquiring whatever qualities they have in response to and as a result of the *absence* of such qualities, which is the void. That is, atomism and being-for-self both undermine the notion of simply given qualities by asking what in the fundamental entities' self-relationship – as represented by the "void" – promotes the qualities that are thought to exist?

3.26. Social Atomism

What I have just spelled out is the way in which, as I said earlier, freedom – or the thing's capacity to be itself – is still, somehow, what "collapsed" being-for-self is about. According to the account that I have just given, following Hegel, freedom or the thing's capacity to be itself is also what atomism is about, whether or not the theorists of atomism recognize or articulate this fact.

If we understand this claim of Hegel's, we can also see the connection that he clearly believes exists between physical atomism and social atomism. This connection isn't necessarily obvious from the historical documents, since the early Greek atomists, Leucippus and Democritus, are not reported to have advocated a social contract theory, which is the typical embodiment of what Hegel (and other writers) describe as "social atomism." Epicurus, writing considerably later, does combine physical and social atomism, since he follows Democritus in many respects while also describing justice as the result of a "pact about neither

harming one another nor being harmed" (*Principle Doctrines* 33). But he doesn't (as far as we know) develop the latter doctrine in any detail, but instead seems to treat it as not needing particular elaboration or defense – perhaps because it had been for some time a common view among the Greek Sophists (who, as it happens, had no particular commitment to physical atomism). In modern times, leading social contract theorists such as Hobbes may be materialists, but are not for that reason necessarily physical atomists. So the two views aren't generally perceived as entailing each other.

Nevertheless, I think Hegel gives us good reasons to regard them as connected, at a deeper level. These are (1) the way in which social atomism, just like physical atomism, is founded on the idea of a self-preserving, identical entity, together with (2) Hegel's implied argument that the model of such an entity – what gives it its intuitive attractiveness for us both in the physical case and in the social case – is the notion of an entity's "being itself," and the way in which its truly being itself seems to require it to transcend the conceptual space of quality – to have an identity that is not reducible to its relations to others – via a "being-for-self." If social atomism and physical atomism both ultimately rely on this single underlying intuitive idea, then the fact that they are often articulated separately is not enough to establish that they are logically independent of each other. It will always be possible, of course, to advocate one without advocating the other. But someone who understands what makes one of them plausible, will also have to see the plausibility of the other one, and will have to have special, independent reasons for not pursuing it.

In any case, there are two crucial things to take away from Hegel's analysis of atomism for his further development of the idea of freedom. The first is the way in which social atomism, in particular, seeks to preserve this compelling idea of the entity's being itself and preserving itself by asserting its independence of its relations to others – but *without* embodying transcendence, or inner freedom, in itself, because of the difficulty of arriving at that embodiment (the difficulty that led to the "collapse" of being-for-self). It is a striking fact that the "rational choice" approach to human behavior is not satisfied, as much ostensibly scientific thinking about human beings is satisfied, to assert that human behavior can and should be explained on the same principles on which the behavior of other organisms, and (for that matter) inorganic bodies, is explained. Instead, rational choice theory is determinedly *normative*, in that it sets up standards of rationality (often embodied

in the theorems of microeconomics) and interprets human behavior as approximating, in varying degrees, to those standards. Hobbes's "natural laws" of what he nevertheless calls "*reason*" are the prototype of this approach to human beings. So although "rational choice" theories reject, as conflicting with scientific naturalism, the sort of reasoning about final ends that Plato, Kant, and Hegel take to be a defining feature of the human capacity for rationality (that is, they reject the transcendence that is a defining feature of "infinity," as Hegel explains it), they don't for that reason simply homogenize humans with nature in general. They see humans as suitable addressees for a normative theory – just as the atomism that Hegel analyzes sees its atoms as seeking, if not to transcend their finite condition (since that seems to be beyond their "collapsed" reach), still at least, unlike mere determinate beings, to avoid being solely through their relations to the conceptual space of others. That is, atomism and rational choice theories, as normative theories, preserve the germ of transcendence (they present contingency still "*in the shape of will*" [PR §15]), and to that extent they testify to hopes and dreams which their conception of "science" prevents them from articulating fully or pursuing overtly.

The second thing to take away from Hegel's discussion of atomism is his demonstration, which I will now turn to, of how the "abstract, formal" independence that it assigns to its atoms is an utter failure – how, as he says, it "destroys itself" (WL 5:192/GW 21:160,33/172). The problem is that the "repulsion" of the many ones from each other is, in fact, a relationship between them. Each of them therefore becomes one that "is not for-self but for-one, where that one is in fact an *other* one" (WL 5:190/GW 21:159,9–10/170). If, then, they are to have being-for-self through their mutual repulsion, in which they supersede each other and each posits the other as a mere being-for-other, each of them must at the same time repel this conception from itself and posit the ones (itself included) as *not* being for an other. But this won't work, because (1) from an observer's point of view, they are all doing just the same thing, and thus what each of them regards as distinguishing it from the others does not distinguish it at all; and (2) from the one's own point of view, resistance (*Widerstand*) by the others to being posited as mere being-for-other – resistance that can take the form either of their simple affirmative being, or of their own attempts to posit the first one as itself mere being-for-other – will prevent the one's positing of the others as mere being-for-other from succeeding (WL 5:191–192/GW 21:159–160,19–17/171).

Thus, in its attempt to exclude the ones from itself, the one targets itself, as well as the others, and fails to set itself apart. As a result, repulsion passes over into an identity, a superseding of the ones' difference and externality, which Hegel entitles "attraction." The ones are all, in effect, "one one," as he puts it (WL 5:193/GW 21:161,1/173).

Considering the arguments – (1) and (2) – that Hegel gives for this claim, it is natural to wonder (regarding [1]) why the one should be concerned about the fact that its endeavors are exactly the same as those of all the other ones, and (regarding [2]) why it should be dissuaded from its endeavor by the "opposition" of the others – can't it just unilaterally "posit" them in whatever way suits it? Both questions have essentially the same answer. The development of Hegel's Logic so far has not yielded a concept of space or time that could allow qualitatively indistinguishable things to be, nevertheless, non-identical (by having different locations in space or time). We are talking, so far, only about things that differ in their specific qualities. So if something that aims to be itself by "repelling" or "excluding" multiple others from itself does not thereby distinguish itself qualitatively from those others, it fails to distinguish itself from them at all. This is the point made by (1). By the same token, the one must take into account the facts that the others (which it is trying to posit as, unlike itself, merely being-for-other) are affirmative beings, and that they are trying to posit *it*, in the same way, as merely being-for-other. It must take these facts into account because it has no qualitative basis for distinguishing itself from the others, for viewing them differently from itself; and without such a basis, in the world that Hegel has so far developed, it is impossible to view things differently. Hence the failure that Hegel describes in (2).

This reminder of the extreme simplicity of the logical resources that are available to the atomism that Hegel describes may cause us to wonder how much that atomism in fact has in common with a sophisticated social atomism such as Glaucon's (in Plato's *Republic*) or Epicurus's or Hobbes's or David Gauthier's. Would these theorists' constructions "destroy themselves" in the way that the atomism that Hegel discusses here destroys itself? We will have to see whether Hegel can develop resources comparable to those that Glaucon and Epicurus and Hobbes and Gauthier believe they have at their disposal – whether, that is, Hegel can give sense to the features of the complex world that Greeks and modern people think they inhabit – without conceding the simple independence of one agent from another that all of these social atomists fundamentally presuppose.

This is what he intends to do in the remainder of the *Logic* and the *System*.

Hegel's basic claim however, is very clear. If "self-subsistence, pushed to the point of the one . . . is the supreme, most stubborn *error*, which takes itself for the highest truth, manifesting in more concrete forms as abstract freedom, pure ego and, further, as *evil*" (WL 5:192/GW 21:160,32–36/172; emphasis added), then an alternative conception of selfhood and freedom is clearly very much to be desired. And in view of what he has conceded to this conception of self-subsistence – that it reflects a very substantial difficulty in the development of concrete freedom, namely, the difficulty that led to the collapse of being-for-self – he appears to have his work cut out for him.

IDENTITY, CONTRADICTION, ACTUALITY, AND FREEDOM (*SCIENCE OF LOGIC* II)

4.1. Introduction to Chapters 4 and 5

I indicated in the two previous chapters that Hegel seems to have at least two major goals in his account of freedom. The first is to show that one cannot be fully free while regarding some free agents (as Kant says) “merely as means” – having an attitude towards them that doesn’t fully reflect their capacity for freedom. (How one’s attitude towards free agents could fully reflect their capacity for freedom, remains to be spelled out.) Hegel’s second major goal is to show that it is reasonable to regard freedom, in the strong sense of the word that he shares with Kant, as a full reality, and not as something that one can take seriously only by postulating a parallel “world” or “standpoint” for it to inhabit. Obviously, the practical relevance of the first goal is likely to depend, to a considerable extent, on success in achieving the second goal, which is why (if my interpretation in Chapter 3 is correct) Hegel addresses the second goal almost from the beginning of the *Science of Logic*.

In the latter part of Chapter 3, I described how Hegel sees success in regard to both of these goals as imperilled by what he calls the “collapse” of being-for-self or true infinity – the “collapse” that leads to what Hegel calls “atomism,” in which individual things (“atoms”) transcend their finite natures by recognizing an “ought,” but immediately short-circuit this transcendence by connecting the “ought” only to their own desire-satisfaction and self-preservation. Hegel gave reasons for thinking that this atomism “destroys itself” (WL 5: 192/172; see 3.26), but his conclusion was not to return directly to true infinity or being-for-self and try to resuscitate them. Rather, he appeared to recognize that atomism’s “self-destruction” was not the last word on that subject, but that the defenders of what could more generally be called “rational

egoism" could reasonably seek to provide it with additional conceptual resources, such as concepts of diversity, subject and object, space and time, and the "side-by-side" existence of mutually indifferent entities (resources that hadn't yet been developed in the extremely simple world of "Quality"), which might enable the defenders to restate their doctrine in a more defensible way. Thus, part of what I take to be happening in the subsequent sections of the *Logic* and the *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Spirit* is that Hegel is developing some of these resources, "on behalf of" rational egoism, so as to give it the benefit of the doubt, but with the intention of showing that this development will nevertheless lead back to something substantially equivalent to true infinity (though without the latter's proclivity to "collapse"). And thus Hegel is showing that, given all the conceptual resources that either side might ask for, infinite freedom nevertheless wins and egoism loses.

Can Hegel in fact develop resources comparable to those that Epicurus and Hobbes, and their followers down to the present, take for granted – diversity, space and time, the "side-by-side" existence of things – without conceding the egoism and social atomism that Epicurus and Hobbes and their followers believe follow automatically from the systematic deployment of these resources? That is, can Hegel develop these resources in a way that lines up with true infinity rather than with spurious infinity? How do Hegel's "Essence" and "Concept" solve the problem that caused being-for-self to "collapse" into atomism? And do they do so in a way that precludes egoism's reemerging?

To develop these resources in a way that lines up with true infinity and solves the problem that caused being-for-self to "collapse" into atomism, and thus precludes egoism's reemerging, Hegel needs to show, at least, (1) that the side-by-side plurality of things that is characteristic of a world or nature as it is initially understood by science necessarily "inwardizes itself" (thus generating "Essence"), and (2) that this inwardness necessarily converts itself into beings that are mediated with each other ("being that has been restored, but as its infinite mediation and negativity in itself" [WL 6: 269/596]) in such a way – this result being the "absolute Idea," the realized Concept – that it makes no sense for these beings to relapse into egoism by regarding each other merely as means. Step (1) is the transition to "Essence" (and also the transition from Nature to Spirit), and step (2) is the transition to the (eventually "realized") "Concept," and more immediately, the transition from "Substance" to "Subject."

Step (2), in particular, is often seen as a major problem for Hegel. Charles Taylor says that here "we seem to have once more a case where

Hegel is sure of an ascending transition because he is already sure of it; where he gives us what are hints and traces of the higher reality which the lower is meant to be an emanation from, and takes these for a proof" (*Hegel*, p. 294). Klaus Düsing says that "it is not shown why, in fact, the separation between the substances [at the end of the Doctrine of Essence] must be overcome by a *thinking* and not just an essentially *existing* self-relationship."¹ And Rolf-Peter Horstmann describes Hegel's oft-repeated claims that (as Horstmann puts it) "thinking and being are one and the same, or that only thinking has being," and that this unity is "the whole of reality" – claims that correspond, in effect, to step (2), and the transition from Substance to Subject – not as claims that Hegel *argues for*, but as reflecting a "*conviction*" that Hegel "never felt any need to question."²

Step (1) is less often attacked, because it is less often explicitly discussed, but similar objections, no doubt, might be raised against it. When Hegel writes that Essence's "movement consists in . . . becoming as infinite being-for-self what it is in itself," and thus becoming "Concept" (WL 6:16/GW 11:243/391), critics who are doubtful about the last stage – becoming "Concept" – might well also question the origin and status of (that is, the "inwardizing" that led to) the "essence" that supposedly has this last stage implicit "in itself." As we examine the way in which Hegel interprets this "essence" and its "inwardness," it will become clear that much of the "idealism" that becomes explicit in the Concept is indeed already implicit in "essence," so that this step of the argument should certainly not be uncontroversial.

Both in relation to step (1) of the argument against egoism, then, and as background for step (2) of the argument, it will be important for us to get clear about what Hegel is up to at the beginning of "Essence": What is this new project about, and what does it presuppose? To answer this question, I will begin by outlining the remainder of the Doctrine of Being: the sections on Quantity and Measure.

4.2. Quantity and the Theme of "Unity"

Being, Hegel says, is the immediate (WL 5:82/GW 21:68,3/81; 6:13/GW 11:241,4/389). The emergence of something that is not

1 Klaus Düsing, *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976), p. 231; emphasis added.

2 Article, "Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich," in *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), vol. 4, pp. 265 and 266 (emphasis added).

oriented towards immediacy already begins – as one might expect – at the point in the *Logic* where the dangerous consequences of immediacy have become evident – namely, in the discussion of the “one,” in whose “immediacy” the “inner meaning” of being-for-self “disappears” (WL 5:182/GW 21:151,31–32/163) and is replaced by atomism and, together with it, by the “supreme, most stubborn error, which takes itself for the highest truth” and one of the concrete forms of which is “evil” (WL 5:192/GW 21:160,33–36/172). Hegel writes:

The fundamental determination of quality is being and immediacy, in which limit and determinateness are so identical with the being of something, that with its alteration the something itself vanishes; posited in this way, it is determined as finite. Because of the *immediacy of this unity*, in which the difference has vanished but is implicitly present in the unity of being and nothing, the difference as otherness in general falls *outside* this unity. This relation to other *contradicts* immediacy, in which qualitative determinateness is self-relation (1). This otherness supersedes itself in the infinity of being-for-self, which realizes the difference (which in the negation of the negation is concretely in it [*an und in ihm*]) as the one and the many and their relations, and has raised quality to the *true* [*wahrhafte*] *unity*, that is, a unity that is no longer immediate but is posited as in agreement with itself (2).

(WL 5:199/GW 21:165–166,15–32/177–178; emphasis changed and numbers added)

The theme of this paragraph is “unity,” which is a concept that Hegel does not formally introduce or define. What he says about it is revealing, however. Because the “unity” of being and determinateness (that is, negation) in the something is “immediate,” the something becomes dependent on an other – and such a relationship is not “immediate.” Because of this contradiction (1), we move to the infinity of being-for-self, in which the “difference” (the articulatedness) that was previously between being and determinateness is now (after being-for-self’s “collapse,” I would add) between the one and the many. But the result of this move, Hegel says, is that quality becomes a “unity that is no longer immediate,” but instead is “posited as in agreement with itself,” or “true” (2).

The initial embodiment of this new “unity” is “*quantity*,” which is “the determinateness that has become indifferent to being, a limit that is just as much no limit; being-for-self that is simply identical with being-for-other” (WL 5:209/GW 21:173,5–8/185). That is, quantity is a determinateness in which there is no issue about selfhood, no conflict between

a thing's project of being itself and its being determined by its relations to other things. The "limit" of quantity is "no limit" – it's a determinateness that is "indifferent to being" – because changing it, bringing in what was previously "other" or extruding and making "other" what was previously itself, does not affect the existence of quantity, as such, in the way that changing the relation of a *quality* to its other affects the existence of that quality, as such. Such a change *would* affect the existence of what Hegel calls a "*quantum*," which is a *specific* quantity, but it does not affect the presence of mere quantity as such. Examples of mere quantity as such are space, time, matter, light and the 'I' (WL 5:214/GW 21:178,8–10/189). Quantity is a continuous plenum, uninterrupted by anything selflike, so it doesn't have an identity that hinges on its relation to what is other than it.

But to return to "unity," the theme of Hegel's description of the process by which we arrived at quantity: Hegel appears to be telling us that quantity is not merely a 'degenerate' form of being, in relation to quality (not merely a form of being that's associated with such un-"spiritual" modes of being as number, space, and time); rather, quantity embodies something, which he's calling "true unity," or "agreement with itself," that might turn out to be a viable substitute for the immediacy that turned out (in the vicissitudes of finitude and being-for-self) to be, perhaps, a questionable goal.

This interpretive hunch is confirmed by the subsequent development of Quantity and of the category that follows it, Measure. Corresponding to the moments of "repulsion" and "attraction" by which the "one" was converted into quantity, Hegel finds in quantity a moment of "discreteness" and a moment of "continuity." He describes this continuity as "the one as superseded, as *unity*, [and] its self-continuation as such in the discreteness of the ones. Consequently," he says, "it is posited as *one* magnitude [*eine* Größe]" (WL 5:230/GW 21:191,33–35/201). The positing as "*one* magnitude" follows, I take it, because as soon as it's regarded as a special kind of being – that is, a determinate being – contrasted to another kind of being that is continuous magnitude, discrete magnitude takes on the limitedness that determinate being must have: It becomes a specific magnitude, "*one* magnitude." Notice, once again, the role of "unity" (now identified as the "superseded 'one,'" in the form of continuity) as the underlying, background condition of this development.³

3 A. V. Miller translates *Einheit*, in this passage, as "unit," rather than "unity," which totally scrambles the passage's meaning, as I understand it.

Hegel says that the specification of this one magnitude, or “quantum” (= “how much”), as a number, involves a “contradiction,” which has something to do with the “externality,” in relation to each other, of the plurality of “ones” of which the number is made up (WL 5:234/GW 21:195,21–27/204). As I understand his explanation of this contradiction (an explanation that comes quite a few pages later), what it comes down to is that in order to specify a magnitude by means of a number, we need to employ a unit of some kind (or something that is already specified in terms of such a unit). This unit or already specified thing is what Hegel refers to as a “degree” or “step” (*Grad*). His point about the plurality of ones of which the magnitude-specifying number is made up is that there is nothing to distinguish any one of them as the appropriate unit, so that “this plurality collapses of its own accord into its continuity and becomes a simple unity . . . [and] the externality which constituted the ones as a plurality vanishes in the one as a relation of number to itself” (WL 5:251/GW 21:210,12–20/218). That is, a unit must come from some other source than from among the “many” that make up the magnitude; the magnitude-specifying number must itself be “number” (“a relation of number to itself”), it can’t be found among the “ones.” Hegel elaborates this point as the “quantitative infinite progress” (WL 5:262/GW 21:220/226ff.). This infinite progress has a parallel structure to the qualitative infinite progress by which finite quality sought to define itself by appealing to what it is not, and then to what what-it-is-not is not, and so on to infinity (EL §93). The specification of what the magnitude really is depends upon the specification of a unit or a “degree.” But in order to specify the magnitude of the unit or degree, in its turn, we would need another unit or degree; and so on to infinity. We can’t solve this problem by means of an “arbitrarily chosen unit,” because the magnitude of such a unit is, precisely, not specified. The upshot is that if there is such a thing as a fully specified magnitude, its specification depends upon an endless sequence of considerations that are external to it. No magnitude is fully specified in itself.⁴

4 In a well-known Remark, Hegel describes Kant, Fichte, and Schelling as being tempted to imagine the relation between morality and nature, the infinite and the finite, as a quantitative one: “The relation to the quantitative becomes itself quantitative; . . . the power of the ‘I’ over the ‘not-I,’ over the senses and external nature, is . . . so pictured that morality can and ought continually to *increase*, and the power of sense continually to *diminish*” (WL 5:268/GW 21:225,22–27/231). “This standpoint which is powerless to overcome the qualitative opposition between the finite and the infinite and to grasp the idea of the true will which is substantial freedom, has recourse to *magnitude* in order to use it as a mediator,

In this way, quantum (the definite quantity) is superseded: Its definiteness lies outside it, and this makes it, abstractly, a “non-being” (WL 5:276/GW 21:233,6/238). Hegel now points out, however, that a non-being is also something with magnitude (namely, I take it, zero magnitude), so that quantum is not broken off, by this discovery; rather, “it continues in its non-being . . . [so that] its non-being, its infinity, is limited – that is, this ‘beyond’ is superseded, [because] it is itself specified as a quantum” (WL 5:277/GW 21:233,7–13/238). No quantum is fully specified in itself, but what is outside it is nevertheless still quantum, so the domain of quantum is not superseded. Though it is not superseded, quantum reveals itself, through this “negation of the negation,” as *quality* (WL 5:278/GW 21:235,37/239), because quantum “is *itself* just by being external to itself” (WL 5:277/GW 21:233,16/238), and being itself (as we know from Chapter 3) is what quality is about.

4.3. Measure

Thus we get a return to quality, within quantity. The resulting union of quality and quantity, Hegel calls “measure” (*Maß*), which he describes as “self-related externality [which] as self-related is at the same time *superseded* externality and exhibits [*hat an ihr selbst*] the difference from itself which, as an externality, is the *quantitative* moment, and as taken back into itself is the *qualitative* moment” (WL 5:387/GW 21:323,11–16/327). Hegel compares the role of this “third” moment, measure, in integrating quality with quantity to the role of Spirit in integrating logic (“the exposition of God” [WL 5:44/GW 21:34,39/50]) with nature: “In the true triad [*Dreiheit*] there is not only *unity* [*Einheit*] but *union* [*Einigkeit*]; the conclusion of the syllogism is a unity possessing *content* and *actuality*, a unity which in its wholly concrete determination is Spirit” (WL 5:389/GW 21:325,9–13/328). Hegel explicitly associates this “true triad” with “true infinity” (*ibid.*), the unity-in-difference of finite and infinite. Quality is apparently identified with logic, the infinite, and the Creator, and quantity with nature, the finite, and the created world.

because magnitude is superseded quality, the difference which has become indifferent” (WL 5:269/GW 21:226,27–32/232). Hegel’s objection to this line of thought is that “it is true that the quantitative is the supersession of immediate determinateness [that is, of the qualitative], but it is only an incomplete supersession, only the *first* negation, not the infinite, not the negation of the negation” (WL 5:270/GW 21:228,2–5/233). The negation of the negation will be found in Measure and in what emerges from it – namely, Essence and the Concept.

Following the pattern of true infinity, measure must begin to show us how the latter three transcend themselves, to realize themselves in the former three, and how the former three depend upon the latter three's self-transcendence for their reality. Thus measure will be the first major step on the return path from the collapse of being-for-self, which led (through atomism) to the point of view of (mere) Quantity – it will be the first major step toward the conception of reality as “union,” “a unity possessing content and actuality,” which is Hegel's goal. “Unity,” as such, is evidently not the goal, but we can see that it will be an important step along the way.

So, let's see what measure contributes to this project. First, Hegel establishes that measure isn't just a matter of adopting “units of measure” by convention (WL 5:395–396/GW 21:330–331, 36–28/334). On the contrary, everything that exists has a scale of magnitude that it has to be within, in order to exist at all (WL 5:396/GW 331,31–38/334). The ancient Greek paradoxes of the bald head and the heap (WL 5:397/GW 21:331,29–30/335) bring this out: Changes that appear to be merely “gradual” – the removal of one hair at a time, one pebble at a time – eventually bring about the new quality of baldness or of the absence of a heap. Thus a non-bald head or a heap has an implicit measure. Hegel refers to this kind of implied measure as the “specified” measure, and, insofar as it is thought of as separate from the head or the heap, as a “specifying” measure. Such a specifying measure can, in fact, be another concrete thing, as when the surrounding environment (say, the air) specifies a temperature that an object must deal with, assimilate, in its own way (WL 5:401/GW 21:335–336/338). In practice, the air and the object each specify, for the other, something that it must deal with. This is “real measure,” in which both sides specify *each other*; each side is an independent thing, having its own measure, but each likewise presents something that the other must deal with – a parameter for the other – and thus determines (in part) what a viable magnitude or measure for the other will be. Hegel's point is *not* that if an object doesn't “deal with” its environment, it will be destroyed, by some causal process, so that “dealing” is an imperative of causal *survival*; rather, his point is that to be the kind of thing that it is *is* to deal with its environment in certain ways, so that “dealing” is an imperative of logical existence, as such. That's what it means to say that pairs of things specify each other's measure. Hegel's primary examples of this “specification” of measure are taken from physics and chemistry: the combination of two metals (“combination of two measures” [WL 5:415/GW 21:347/350]), the

chemical interaction of substances (“measure as a series of measure-relations” [WL 5:416–420/GW 21:348–352/351–354]), and the “elective affinity” of acids and bases (WL 5:420–435/GW 21:352–363/354–366). In each case, and especially in the latter ones, certain kinds of interaction with others are essential features – “measures” – of the objects themselves.

The intimate way in which these latter substances – chemical substances, acids and bases – co-determine each other’s character, leads Hegel to the special case of a “nodal line [*Knotenlinie*] of measure-relations,” in which a substance or set of substances act or interact in a way that is partially merely quantitative, but is also intermittently qualitative. As the strings of an instrument are tuned, quantitative changes give way, periodically, to qualitative ones, at the points where the increased tension of a string (quantitative change) yields not just a different note, but a note that *harmonizes* with another string (qualitative change). As steam is cooled (quantitative change), it reaches a point at which it condenses (qualitative change); as it is cooled further (another quantitative change), it eventually reaches a point at which it freezes (another qualitative change). Hegel’s observation about these phenomena:

Such a being-for-self, because it is at the same time essentially a relation of quanta, is open to externality and to quantitative alteration; it has a range within which it remains indifferent to this alteration and does not change its quality (1). But there enters a point in this quantitative alteration at which the quantity is changed and the quantum shows itself as specifying, so that the altered quantitative relation is converted into a measure, and thus into a new quality, a new something. . . . But because the difference falls into this quantitative aspect, the relation between the new something and its predecessor is one of indifference; their difference is the external one of quantum (2). The new something has therefore not emerged from or developed out of its predecessor but directly *from itself*, that is, from the *inner specifying unity* which has not yet entered into determinate being (3). The new quality or new something is subjected to the same progressive alteration, and so on to infinity (4).

(WL 5:437/GW 21:365,38–20/367–368; emphasis and reference numbers added)

Hegel refers to this complex as a “being-for-self” because it is a system that has an identity or a mode of organization that goes beyond its quantity and quality at a given time (1). It is a system of stretched strings and harmonies, or a system of transformations of H₂O. It exhibits an order that is systematic, but parts of that order are purely quantitative

changes. So the relation between the new something (the new quality) and its predecessor – between, for example, fluid water and ice – is not itself a qualitative relation, but rather is one of indifference; it is the external relation of quantum (2). Because of this indifference, the new something or quality has not emerged from or developed out of its predecessor (in the way that one quality emerges logically from another in Determinate Being); rather it has emerged from “the *inner specifying unity* which has not yet entered into determinate being” (3). Hegel’s point is that what specifies the new quality, here, is not “negation” (as it was in Quality), and is not mere quantity, either. The new quality that the system takes on is specified neither by what it is not (as in Quality) nor by the quantitative change in the tension of the string or the temperature of the water. The new specific character of the system must therefore be specified by something else entirely – which Hegel describes here as the “inner specifying unity” (and which he will later will baptize as “absolute indifference,” and as “essence”).

It is also important to note the final statement: “The new quality or new something is subjected to the same progressive alteration, and so on to infinity.” (4) In what sense does this “progressive alteration” (*Fortgang seiner Veränderung*) go “on to infinity”? Certainly not in the sense that strings can be tightened to infinitely greater tension, or that water goes through infinitely many qualitative transformations as its temperature is reduced, or that we have to think of either the tightening or the temperature change as composed of infinitely many gradations. To see why Hegel brings in infinity here, we need to remember what “alteration” meant in Quantity, and in Quality. It meant the search for determinateness. The initial quality “altered” because it gained determinateness only by relating to others (“being-for-other”) (WL 5: 127/GW 21:106/118; see 3.4). Its “alteration” was the admission that it depended on others for its determinacy. The same was true of the “alteration” of Quantum. To specify a quantum, we need to mobilize something other than it: a unit of measure or a measured amount. Thus the quantum “alters”: It is dependent on an other (WL 5:260/GW 21:218,3/226). In the present case of Measure, Hegel has made it clear that the transformations that take place on the nodal line are not determined (specified) in the usual qualitative way, or in the usual quantitative way. How *can* they be specified? By a “progressive alteration, to infinity,” he says. I take this to mean that they “could” be specified by in some way expanding the system that is being studied, to take into account everything that contributes to specifying its character. But this expansion must be in

principle unlimited – “to infinity” – or else the result risks looking just as arbitrary and unsatisfying as the mere statement that “a string under this tension harmonizes with a string under that tension” or “steam is something that condenses at 100 degrees Centigrade and freezes at 0 degrees Centigrade.” What specifies these measures cannot be limited in advance, and it may be, in principle, everything. That is, it may be in principle unlimited.

It’s important to see that the question that Hegel is addressing here is still not one that can be answered by the empiricist’s all-purpose recourse to “causation.” The “determination” (*Bestimmung*) or “specification” (*Spezifizieren*) that Hegel is focussing on is still logical in the sense that time and space, as such, play no role in the realm that thought has constructed, up to this point, so neither do normal causal relationships (before and after, transformation). The issue is not what “causal laws” govern the heating and cooling of water, but how are the qualitatively different phases of that process related to one another as phases of *one and the same thing, system, or substance*? How is it that one thing, system, or substance takes such radically qualitatively different forms when within each of them its alteration is merely quantitative? How does this internal structure affect our conception – our “determination,” our “measure-specification” – of what the thing, system, or substance *is*, that we’re talking about?

And Hegel’s point about infinity, in this connection, is that if we cut short the process of “determination” or “specification” at any particular point, saying that the kind of thing, system, or substance that we’re talking about is simply “water,” or simply “H₂O,” or simply a particular configuration of electrons and protons, or a particular class of “super-string,” or whatever it might be, we will be correspondingly limiting our understanding (our determination or specification) of what the thing, system, or substance really is. Hegel’s examples from physics and chemistry illustrate what he takes to be important progress in the determination or specification of what things really are, and his point is that the last thing that a rationally informed scientist would want to do would be to place a limit on progress of this sort and say, “This is it. Beyond this specification or determination, there is no point in going any further.”

Hegel sums up the situation thus:

The quantitative reference beyond itself to an other which is itself quantitative perishes in the emergence of a measure relation, of a quality

(1); and the qualitative transition is superseded in the very fact that the new quality is itself only a quantitative relation (2). This transition of the qualitative and the quantitative into each other proceeds on the basis of their *unity*, and the meaning of this process is only the determinate being, the showing or positing that such a *substrate* underlies the process, *a substrate which is their unity* (3).

(WL 5:444/GW 21:371,14–23/372–373; numbers and emphasis added)

Mere quantity perishes in the emergence of a measure relation insofar as the latter constitutes the *quality* of distinct self-subsistent somethings (WL 5:412/GW 21:345,13–15/348), as in the combination of metals, the sequence of measure-relations in chemistry, and the nodal line of measure-relations. Quantity as such is superseded, here, into relations between qualities (1). On the other hand, quality itself can be seen in measure as a quantitative relation, because of the way it succumbs to merely quantitative changes (2). This transition of the qualitative and the quantitative into each other – most dramatically in the nodal line of measure-relations – implies an underlying substrate that ties the process together, that constitutes their unity (3):

Now such relations are determined only as nodal points of one and the same substrate. . . . The measures and the self-subsistent things posited with them are reduced to *states* [*Zustände*]. The alteration is only change of a *state*, and what goes through the transition [*das Übergehende*] is posited as remaining the *same* in the process.

(WL 5:444/GW 21:371,32–37/373)

That is, the “inner specifying unity” (as Hegel called it earlier) can be thought of as something that underlies and persists through the processes of transition: as a “substrate” expressed through changing “states.” This idea leads to the final topic of the Doctrine of Being: “absolute indifference.”

4.4. Absolute Indifference

How are we to name and understand this “substrate,” which underlies quantity and quality and their interrelations? The first name for it that Hegel considers is “absolute indifference” – “indifferent” in that it is undetermined, unspecified; “absolutely” indifferent in that it is a process of self-mediation resulting, through the negation of all quantity and quality, and of their “initially immediate unity,” measure, in a “simple

unity” (WL 5:445–446/GW 21:373,34–9/375). Hegel immediately observes that if it’s interpreted as something that is external to its “states” in a *qualitative* sense, this indifference won’t work (it “vanishes”): Quality is defined as determinate being, so something that is different from determinate being cannot be *qualitatively* different from it. As a result, we must say that

what was called ‘state’ is its *immanent*, self-related differentiation; it is precisely externality and its vanishing which make the unity of being into indifference and they are therefore *within* this indifference, which therewith *ceases to be only a substrate* and in its own self [*an ihr selbst*] only abstract [; instead, it is now] *the concrete*, which is mediated with itself, in itself, through the negation of all the determinations of being.

(WL 5:446/GW 21:373,19–27/375; emphasis added and sequence altered)

The vanishing externality is now immanent, within the “indifference”: The “indifference” differentiates *itself*. How should we conceptualize this internal differentiation? The first possibility that Hegel considers is “indifference as the inverse ratio of its factors” (WL 5:446/GW 21:374/375). In this approach, one thinks of the two differentiated sides as distinguished by the preponderance, in one, of one quality, and of the opposite quality in the other. Both sides have some of each quality, so that the differentiation itself won’t be qualitative, but the relative *amounts* of the qualities in each side are inversely proportional. As Giacomo Rinaldi explains, Hegel here is alluding to the position taken by Schelling in his accounts of the respective roles of subject and object, infinite and finite, or mind and nature, within the “absolute,” which Schelling also calls the “indifference.”⁵ Since the distinction between the two sides can’t be qualitative, because that would make both sides finite, Schelling concludes that it must be quantitative, and sets it up in the way that I just described (cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, TWA 20:440; and also WL 5:270/GW 21:227,26–35/233).

Hegel finds a contradiction within Schelling’s construction, however. The two sides of the relationship have determinate being only insofar as they differ – only insofar as one quality is preponderant on one side and the other quality on the other side. However, the two qualities are not independent of each other. Rather, they constitute a unity, each

5 Giacomo Rinaldi, *A History and Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), p. 178, and compare p. 63.

of them having meaning and reality only in its qualitative relation to the other. But "since their quantitativity is simply of this qualitative nature, each reaches only as far as the other does. . . . In their qualitative relation, each *is* only insofar as the other is" (WL 5:450/GW 21:376, 5–12/378–379). The presence of one is, through their qualitative (negative) relationship, the presence of the other. So neither quality can, in fact, be preponderant, and thus, since they have determinate being only insofar as they *differ*, neither of them can have determinate being.

4.5. Beyond Absolute Indifference: Essence

From the contradiction that Schelling's account falls into, Hegel concludes that the "substrate" must be understood not merely as "indifferent," but as "in itself immanently negative and absolute" – that is to say, as "essence" (WL 5:451/GW 21:377, 1–4/379).

Indifference is now posited as what it is, namely as simple and infinite negative relation-to-self, its incompatibility with itself, its repelling of itself from itself. . . . (1). Now these repelled determinations do not possess themselves, do not emerge as self-subsistent or external determinations, but . . . as determinations which are immanent in the *unity* that *is for-itself*, they *are* only through their repulsion from themselves (2). Instead of being *things that are* [*Seiender*], as in the whole sphere of being, they are now merely *as posited*, simply with the vocation and significance of being *related to their unity*, and thus each of them to its other and to negation (3).

(WL 5:456–457/GW 21:382, 24–6/384; emphasis and reference numbers added)

Indifference, understood as essence, is "relation-to-self" in that it has an identity that is more than the sum of its parts or aspects. It is "infinite" in that, in that self-relationship, it goes beyond finite qualities and quantities. It is "negative" in the sense of the "negation of the negation": that it aims at selfhood, by opposing dependence on what is other than itself. It is "incompatible with itself," and "repels" itself in that it can't remain simple, but (like the "one," in being-for-self) differentiates itself into determinate things, so as to be real (1). But, for the reason explained in the first paragraph of 4.4, these determinate things are not self-subsistent or external to indifference or essence; they are *immanent in its unity*, having their being only through its repulsion from itself. Its unity is "for-itself," rather than just "in itself," in that it is a functioning goal (like selfhood in the original true infinity and being-for-self)

(2). The great divide between the sphere of being, which we have now left behind, and the sphere of essence, is that in the latter, things are determinate only insofar as they are “posited,” and thus only *in relation* to the for-itself *unity* of indifference or essence, including the process of negation by which it differentiates itself (3).

In the following sections, I will examine Hegel’s development of this idea of “essence” (including the idea of “positing”). Before I do so, a brief retrospect. Quality, quantity, and measure were all (to differing degrees) under the sway of the idea that, like “being” itself, being’s determinateness should be something immediate. In quality, being was supposed to be immediately determinate. In true infinity and being-for-self – that is, in the very search for immediacy – a “unity,” however, emerged that did not depend upon immediacy (WL 5:199–200/GW 21:166–167,14–11/178). “Pure quantity,” as a being-for-self that is real but has “returned into itself,” was “infinite *unity*” (WL 5:209/GW 21:173,26–30/185). Analysis of measure led to an “*inner specifying unity*” which has not yet entered into determinate being” (WL 5:437/GW 21:365,17–18/368). When this specifying unity was interpreted as “indifference,” and when this indifference was shown to be “immanently negative” (WL 5:451/GW 21:377,2/379), the resulting “*unity that is for-itself*” (WL 5:457/GW 21:382,39/384) was essence. That is, essence represents a full implementation of the overcoming – which was begun by true infinity and being-for-self – of the idea of immediacy. The idea of immediacy, itself, will, in fact, be radically reinterpreted within Essence’s account of “Reflection.” After we have acquired a full understanding of “reflection,” the reinterpreted immediacy (what is *true* in being’s “immediacy”) will return as “existence” and as the “*real* reflection,” which is actuality and substance (WL 6:201/GW 11:380,14/541), and the Concept will embody this mediation between “being and essence, the immediate and reflection” (WL 6:245/GW 12:11,23–24/577). Thus the final outcome will do justice to immediacy, but without taking it for granted, as Being does.

4.6. Introduction to Essence: Being-in-and-for-self

In his introduction to Book Two, the Doctrine of Essence, Hegel describes knowledge that seeks “the true” or “what being is in and for itself” as not stopping at the immediate and its determinations, but penetrating to its “background,” finding the essence through the mediation of “inwardizing or recollecting” (*Erinnerung*) (WL 6:13/GW

11:241,15/389). Referring back to Plato's *anamnesis* ("recollection"), "*Erinnerung*" is meant to suggest a correspondingly major piece of cognitive progress.⁶

Contrary to what the comparison with Plato might suggest, however, Hegel immediately points out that this penetrating or inwardizing is not just something that *knowledge* does, it is not just *cognitive* progress; rather, it is "the movement of being, itself" (WL6:13/GW 11:241,25/389). It is what we have watched being doing in the course of the Doctrine of Being, as one external feature after another – quality, quantity, measure – is superseded, and we're left with the "inner specifying unity" or essence. By "inwardizing itself *through its own nature*," being "becomes essence" (WL6:13/GW 11:241,26–27/389; emphasis added).

Hegel gives a very interesting explanation of why we shouldn't think of the "inwardizing or recollecting" that produces essence as primarily something that is done by or in a mind, as such. The "essence" that is produced by a process of abstraction that is imposed upon being by something other than itself (that is, by the reflection engaged in by a mind), Hegel says,

is neither *in itself* nor *for itself*; what it is, it is *through an other*, the external, abstractive reflection; and it is *for an other*, namely for abstraction and, in general, for the affirmative being [*Seiende*] that remains confronting it. Its character [*Bestimmung*], therefore, is the dead, empty lack of character.

(WL 6:14/GW 11:242,16–21/390)

Hegel's point, here, is in one respect the same as his point against the spurious infinity and his point against quality (with its dependence on negation): that whatever is determined by its relation to what it is not, is not determined by itself, and is, to that extent, "dead." He is not, however, simply appealing to the need to be immediate, and thus "real" – he is not simply appealing to the opposite of negation (namely, immediacy or self-determination), as a presumed absolute value. Rather, he is saying that *if* something combined self-determination (being-for-self) with *indifference* to all determination (being-in-itself), it would clearly be

6 Another term that Hegel uses for this "inwardizing" is "going into itself" (*Insichgehen*) (WL 6:13/389), which is a close relative of the "being-within-itself" (*Insichsein*) that he found, in Quality, in the "something" that negated its negation in the attempt to achieve "reality" – to have its quality by virtue of itself rather than by virtue of its relations to others – and that he then called "the beginning of the *subject*" (5: 123/115; emphasis added). So we can expect to find important connections between essence and what Hegel will later explicitly discuss as the Subject.

truer (less problematic) than the being that is entangled with problems of negation versus immediacy and self-determination, because it would embody what is true in both sides of that problem:

Essence as it has here come to be... is *being that is in-and-for-itself* [*Anundfürsichsein*]; it is absolute *being-in-itself* in that it is indifferent to all determinateness of being, and otherness and relation-to-other have been completely superseded. ... [B]ut it is equally essentially *being-for-self*; it is itself this negativity, the self-supersession of otherness and determinateness.

(WL 6:14/GW 11:242,22–31/390)

In “Quality,” being-in-itself (*Ansichsein*) embodied immediacy and the project of “reality” as self-determination; but taken by itself (as “absolute”), being-in-itself is simply indifferent to determination: It says, determinate quality (negation) is not what I am. I am something more ultimate than it is. In that sense, being in itself is “indifferent to all determinateness of being.” But essence, Hegel says, is not just being-in-itself; it is also “the *self-supersession* of otherness and determinateness”: It is the process by which quality (negation) and quantity and measure have demonstrated their inadequacy, and been replaced (ultimately) by their “inner specifying unity.” (Hegel refers to this process as “negativity,” because, like the original “negation of the negation,” the “something,” it results from the repeated application of negation, on the categorial level.) Essence, then, is the unity of these two features: *indifference* to all determinateness of being, and the *self-supersession* of these determinatenesses of being. That is, it embodies what was true in being-in-itself (namely, indifference to all determination), together with what was true in being-for-self, or the project of self-determination (namely, the supersession of all determinateness, its replacement by an “inner specifying unity”). Understood in this way, essence embodies the truth both of the *beginning* of “Being,” and of its *end*: It epitomizes what happened in “Being.”

The conception of essence or “*Erinnerung*” as the product of a process of “abstraction” – as something happening in or produced by a mind – on the other hand, would fall entirely *within* the domain of Being, since (as Hegel points out) it would determine essence by contrast to, as the negation of, what “remains confronting it” (WL 6:14/GW 11:242,19–20/390), and determination by negation is, precisely, the characteristic of “quality.” That’s why the conception of essence as “being-in-and-for-self” – as the product not of cognition, as such, but of the “infinite motion of being” (ibid.) (which, of course, can then be retraced by

cognition) – is preferable. It takes account of the whole argument of “Being” in a way that the other conception does not. Consequently, “being-in-and-for-self” becomes Hegel’s standard way of referring to the nature and inner articulation of essence: how it epitomizes the upshot of “Being.”

Hegel’s next point about essence as “being-in-and-for-self” is that, while it is initially undetermined (since all the previous forms of determination have been superseded, in producing it),

it must go over into determinate being [*Dasein*]; for it is *being-in-and-for-self*; that is, it *differentiates* the determinations that are implicit [*an sich*] in it. Because it is self-repelling or indifferent to itself, a negative relation to itself, it sets itself over against itself and is *infinite being-for-self* only in so far as it is unity with itself in this its difference from itself.

(WL 6:15/GW 11:242, 36–4/390; emphasis added)

Why does being-in-and-for-self differentiate the determinations that are implicit in it? This follows from the “being-for-self” part of its formula. I said that in “being-in-and-for-self,” the “being-for-self” part refers to the whole project of self-determination (within the Doctrine of Being), in the course of which, as it unfolds, quality, quantity, and measure are all superseded. But these “determinations” can only be superseded if they have been *present*. When Hegel describes being-in-and-for-self as “negativity” and “the self-supersession of otherness and determinateness” (WL 6:14/GW 11:242/390, quoted two paragraphs back), he describes it as involving that otherness and determinateness in an essential way: It does not “abstract from” them; rather, it is their own “*self*supersession.”⁷ Consequently, like true infinity in relation to the finite that goes beyond itself, being-in-and-for-self depends upon prior developments, even as it goes beyond them. Thus it must have – it must, in part, *be* – determinations. It must “set itself over against itself” and be “unity with itself in this its difference from itself.”

Frequently in the final pages of the Doctrine of Being in the first edition of WL, and also in the final sentence of the Doctrine of Being in the second edition, Hegel refers to the “indifference” that is turning into essence as a “*Selbständigkeit*,” “self-standingness,” independence, or self-sufficiency (WL 5:457/GW 21:382, 15/385; WLfe 225–231). A

⁷ Emphasis added. In the “Transition to Essence,” at the end of Being, Hegel wrote that “it is the very nature of the differences of this unity to supersede themselves, with the result that their unity proves to be absolute negativity” (WL 5:456/384).

self-sufficient essence must, in effect, contain the determinations that it supersedes. (Negativity and true infinity were similarly self-sufficient, in that they did not rely on others or “point beyond themselves” as the finite did.) As Hegel points out, however, these determinations will no longer be products of “becoming” or “transition” or “relation to an other,” as they were in Being; now they will be “self-standing, but . . . only in their *unity* with one another” (WL 6:15/GW 11:242, 11–12/390; emphasis added). The Doctrine of Essence will develop this “unity,” first of all under the headings of “shine” and “reflection.”

The movement of essence, Hegel says in the final paragraph of his introduction, will be for it to “become, as infinite being-for-self, what it is in itself” (WL 6:16/GW 11:243/391). Initially, essence is being-in-and-for-self only “in the determination of being-in-itself”; as it “gives itself its determinate being, which is *equal* to its being-in-itself” it “becomes the Concept” (ibid.). Essence gives us a glimpse of what the Concept will be, but only (as St. Paul wrote) “through a glass, darkly.” When being has been “restored, but as its infinite mediation and negativity in itself” (WL 6: 269/GW 12:29/596) – that is, as manifesting essence – then we will see the Concept clearly. The key appearance of “infinite” in all of these formulations – in essence’s becoming “infinite being-for-self” (WL 6:15/GW 11:242/390 and WL 6:16/GW 11:243, 37/391), and in the description of the Concept as containing being’s “infinite mediation and negativity in itself” (WL 6: 269/GW 12:29/596) – suggests, as I have suggested before, that what is being worked out here is a form of “infinity” (one that will not be prone to “collapsing” into atomism). In “differentiating the determinations that are implicit in it,” and thus “giving itself its determinate being, which is equal to its being-in-itself,” essence sets up precisely the relation of identity-in-difference between the finite (determinate being) and the infinite that constitutes true infinity. But it will do so, this time, with a vocabulary of “existence,” “actuality,” “necessity,” “substance,” “cause and effect,” and “reciprocal action,” which will render the identity more concrete than it was previously.

4.7. Essence as Shine and Negativity: Hegel’s New Conception of Immediacy or Being, and his Critique of “the Given”

In his first chapter on Essence, entitled “Shine” (*Schein*), Hegel repeats his warning that essence must not be taken as simply in contrast to being – as being’s “first negation” – since that would make essence

itself a determinate being. Essence is supposed to be “the absolute *negativity*” (that is, the negation of the negation) of being, “being that has superseded itself *both* as immediate being *and also* as immediate negation, as negation that is burdened with otherness” (WL 6: 19/GW 11:245–246/395; emphasis added). So when essence is understood correctly as “absolute negativity” (the negation of the negation), neither being nor determinate being has preserved itself as something other than essence, and “the immediate that still is distinguished from essence is . . . an immediate that is in and for itself null [*nichtig*]; it is only a *non-essence* [*Unwesen*], shine [*Schein*]” (WL 6: 19/GW 11:246/395).

Hegel connects this nullity, this “shine” – *Schein* is an untranslatable German word that implies a not-necessarily-illusory appearance of something⁸ and that lends itself to metaphors of “shining” and “reflection” – with the “given,” the “data” that both the idealisms of Leibniz, Kant, and Fichte, and the skepticism of Gottlob Ernst Schulze that criticizes those idealisms’ claims to knowledge, agree would be the basis of justifiable knowledge claims (if there were any justifiable knowledge claims) about the world. The connection is through the fact that both the “given” and the “shine” are dependent upon something other than themselves, not for their determinateness, but for their being. Being in themselves “null,” all that they have is immediate determinateness:

Thus shine is what scepticism calls ‘phenomenon,’ and what idealism calls ‘appearance’ [*Erscheinung*]: an immediacy which is not a something or a thing, not in general an indifferent being that would still be, apart from its determinateness and connection with the subject. . . . This content, therefore, may well have no being, no thing or thing-in-itself at its base; it remains on its own account as it is; the content has only been translated from being into shine, so that the latter has within itself those manifold determinatenesses, which are immediate, beings [*seiende*], and mutually related as others. Shine, therefore, is itself *immediately* determinate. It can have this or that content; but whatever content it has, it does not posit this content itself, but has it immediately.

(WL 5: 20/GW 11:246–247/396)

8 *Schein* is untranslatable because English standardly translates *Erscheinung* as “appearance,” and has no other word for *Schein*. A. V. Miller’s “illusory being,” is misleading: There is nothing particularly illusory about *Schein*. In his introduction to the WL, Hegel contrasts the “deceptions” and “*illusions*” of “subjective *Schein*,” as it is pictured by those who don’t appreciate the true importance of the dialectic, to the “*objectivity* of *Schein*,” which belongs to what the “thought-determinations” (that is, the “categories”) “are in reason and in regard to that which is in itself” (WL 5:52/GW 21:40/56; emphasis added). So we seem to be stuck with the transliterated approximation, “shine.”

Readers familiar with anglophone philosophy may think, in connection with these “manifold determinatenesses” that depend upon the “subject” for their existence and “may well have no being, no thing or thing-in-itself at [their] base,” of the “ideas” or “impressions” that Locke, Berkeley and Hume write about, and the “sense-data” of later, “logical” empiricism (Ayer, Carnap). It would be appropriate also to think of W. V. O. Quine’s and especially of Wilfrid Sellars’s critiques of these supposedly “given” ingredients in knowledge.⁹ Kant’s conception of a sensible “intuition” as a necessary ingredient in any knowledge of the world seems to contain a final remnant of this idea of a realm of content that is directly, immediately given to the knower. Although Kant insists that without “concepts,” this content is “blind” (A51/B75), it nevertheless lends something that is somehow indispensable. Presumably, then, this content is determinate in some way that is relevant to the knowledge that is to be based on it or involve it; and such a determinacy is, evidently, immediate – not itself mediated by concepts or anything other than itself. What is Hegel’s objection to this idea of “*immediate* determinacy”?

His original objection – implicit in his analysis of “quality” – to the idea of immediate determinacy was that qualities are determined only by their contrast to (by their “negation” of) other qualities, and therefore their determinacy is not immediate. The attempt to understand quality as nevertheless “real” (by virtue of itself, rather than by virtue of relationships to others) led Hegel eventually to bracket the whole idea of quality, including its revised incarnation in Measure. Whatever determinacy quality represents must be a moment within a larger whole, which we’re now calling “essence.” Now that a supposedly immediate determinacy has been resurrected in the form of “shine,” Hegel argues that when immediacy is understood in a way that is appropriate to the sphere of essence, the immediacy of shine is in fact identical with essence, which makes it a “*mediated* . . . immediacy” (WL 6:22/GW 11:248,34/397; emphasis added) and not, therefore, something that can be taken simply at face value.

His final argument for this conclusion is in two parts, of which the first argues that “absolute negativity” (that is, essence) is immediacy

9 W. V. O. Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” in his *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961); Wilfrid S. Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (first published 1956) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). An important recent discussion of this issue, with reference both to Kant and to Hegel, is John MacDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

(shine), and the second argues that shine is absolute negativity.¹⁰ Taken together, these imply that immediacy (shine) is in fact identical with negativity, and thus it is mediated (since negativity is a complex involving the negation of an initial negation, and thus incorporates two “mediations” within itself). The first part of Hegel’s final argument is as follows:

The negativity [of essence] is negativity in itself; it is its relation to itself and is thus in itself immediacy (1). But it is negative self-relation, a negating that is a repelling of itself, and the immediacy that is in itself is thus the negative or the determined, over against this negativity (2).

(WL 6:22/GW 11:248/398)

Essence’s negativity relates to itself because it is being’s “going into itself” or “*Erinnerung*” (WL 6:13/GW 11:241,15 and 33/389). As a relation to *itself*, it can’t be mediated by anything else, so it is immediate (1). It is a “negative self-relation” – it “repels” itself into something over against itself – because it is “being-in-and-for-self,” which requires determinations that are “self-standing” (albeit in unity with each other), as Hegel said in his introduction to Essence (WL 6:15/GW 11:242,11/390) and as I explained in the previous section. So essence is, or becomes, shine (2).

The second, and crucial part of Hegel’s final argument – namely, his argument that shine is absolute negativity – goes as follows:

Shine is the negative that has a being, but in an other, in its negation; it is the non-self-standingness which is overtly/manifestly [*an ihr*] superseded and null (1). As such, it is the negative returned into itself, the non-self-standing [*das Unselbständige*] as overtly/manifestly non-self-standing (2). This *self-relation* of the negative or the non-self-standingness is its *immediacy*; the self-relation is an *other* than the negative itself; it is the negative’s determinateness against itself, or it is the negation directed against the negative. But negation directed against the negative is the negativity that relates only to itself; it is the absolute superseding of determinateness itself (3).

(WL 6:22–23/GW 11:248,22–32/398)

Since shine is “in and for itself a nullity” (WL 6:19/GW 11:246,14/395), whatever being it has is in something other than itself; it is

¹⁰ In deciphering these arguments in Hegel’s chapter on “Shine,” I have found Klaus J. Schmidt, *Georg W. F. Hegel, Wissenschaft der Logik – Die Lehre vom Wesen: Ein einführender Kommentar* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997) particularly helpful.

“non-self-standing,” and exhibits overtly (*an ihr*) its supersession and nullity. By itself, it amounts to nothing (1). Since it exhibits its nullity overtly, it also exhibits its non-self-standingness overtly; it “returns into itself” as something negative and non-self-standing. That is, it *relates to itself* as something that is negative and non-self-standing (2). Being contrasted to its initial negativeness (its initial dependence, for its being, on something other), this self-relation is an “other” in relation to it (“an *other* than the negative itself”). Being an other in relation to its original negativeness is negating (contrasting with) its original negativeness (it is “the negation directed against the negative”). But such a “negation directed against the negative” is precisely the *double* negation that Hegel calls “negativity.” It is, in effect, the “negative unity with itself” (WL 5:123–124/GW 21:103, 31/115) or the “relation to itself *against* its relation to other” (WL 5:128/GW 21:107, 32/119) that constituted “the beginning of the subject” (WL 5:123/GW 21:103, 27/115), in “Quality.” Hegel is saying that by *relating to itself* as something negative (dependent on an other), and thus having a *self*-relationship, shine is able to achieve a status that is *not merely* negative or merely dependent: It is able, in effect, to think, to be a thought, a center of subjecthood. And as such a center of subjecthood, this “negativity” that shine has become “supersedes determinateness” (that is, it supersedes the immediate determinateness that shine was initially taken to be) absolutely insofar as it *makes the determinateness a moment within the negativity’s process of self-relationship* (3). And this negativity amounts to the same thing as essence, if essence is “going-into-itself” or “*Erinnerung*” (WL 6:13/GW 11:241/389). By *relating to itself* as something negative, or null (which it does by exhibiting its nullity overtly [*an ihr*]), shine becomes thought or subjectivity, negativity or being-in-and-for-self, and thus seems *not* to be a *mere* nullity. This is Hegel’s most fundamental point about shine, or immediate determinateness.

Drawing the consequences of this double argument together, Hegel concludes:

So the *determinateness* that shine is in essence, is *infinite* determinateness; it is only the negative that *goes together with itself*; so it is the determinateness *which as such is self-standingness* and is not determinate (1). – Conversely, the self-standingness, as self-related *immediacy*, is equally sheer *determinateness* and moment and is only as self-related negativity (2). – This negativity that is identical with immediacy, and thus the immediacy that is identical with negativity, is *essence* (3).

(WL6:23/GW 11:248,33–2/398; emphasis added)

I mentioned in the previous section that in the final sections of the Doctrine of Being, Hegel uses “self-standingness” or “self-sufficiency” (*Selbständigkeit*) as equivalent to “indifference,” which (especially in the revised edition of WL) is the final form of “unity” (subsequent to “measure”) in the Doctrine of Being, anticipating and leading into “essence.” Hegel does this because the conclusion of the Doctrine of Being is that none of the forms of determinacy that it has considered – namely, quality, quantity, and measure – makes sense, when taken simply on its own terms, so something that is “self-standing” or “self-sufficient” without them must be preserved, and further developed. So the “self-standingness” that Hegel refers to here is *essence*, taken in itself (and thus as “not determinate”). And what he says in sentence (1) in the passage just quoted, is that the second half of his double argument has shown that the determinateness that shine is, is this essence. When shine “goes together with itself,” it is or becomes self-standingness, which is essence. In sentence (2), he goes on to say that the first half of his double argument has shown, conversely, that this “self-standingness” is “sheer determinateness,” or shine, because essence “is” only insofar as it is or becomes self-related negativity, and thus determinateness, or shine. The moral of (1) and (2) taken together is the statement in (1) that the kind of determinateness that is in question, here, is a new kind – namely, “*infinite* determinateness.” In what way is this determinateness “infinite”? It is “the negative that *goes together with itself*” – that is, the negative that forms something new, something that is not “null,” through its relation to itself. What it forms, and the determinateness that it takes on, are *infinite* in that they are self-contained, self-standing, not dependent on or limited by something other than themselves.

This double movement by which, as Hegel now says, “negativity . . . is identical with immediacy,” and “immediacy . . . is identical with negativity,” and which constitutes “essence” (3), is very reminiscent of the double movement in true infinity, in which “finitude *is* only as a transcending of itself” and “infinity *is* only as a transcending of the finite” (WL 5: 160/GW 21:133/145–146). Here, in Essence, negativity has taken over the central role that was played by being, in the Doctrine of Being, and so we are being given an account of how negativity becomes determinate, just as in Being we got an account of how being became determinate. And the way negativity becomes determinate, through a two-way movement between it and shine or immediacy, parallels the way in which being became determinate through a two-way movement between the finite and the infinite. As I indicated in the introduction to this chapter, Essence seems to be the beginning of the process whereby

the Logic will resurrect true infinity on a more stable basis than its initial one. It is because of this parallel and this connection, I take it, that Hegel calls the new kind of determinateness that he has now identified, “*infinite* determinateness.” Quality was determined by negation; quantity was determined by indifference (“quantum is the indifferent determinacy, . . . the determinacy that goes beyond itself, negates itself” [WL 5:210/GW 21:174, 33–35/185]); measure was determined in a way that involved “identity with itself,” and was thus “mediated with itself” (WL 5:390/GW 21:326, 28–30/329–330), and in itself “being-in-and-for-self,” or essence (WL 5:391/GW 21:326, 37/330). Essence itself is “*posited as*” mediation with itself or being-in-and-for-self (ibid.); this is what we are seeing in the analysis of essence and shine that we have been following. Essence’s determinateness, shine, is determined by its mediation with itself or its being-in-and-for-self – which amounts to negativity, or double negation. Hegel expresses it this way:

Shine, therefore, is essence itself, but essence in a determinateness, but in such a way that the determinateness is only essence’s moment, and *essence* [itself] is the *shining of itself within itself*.

(WL 6:23/GW 11:249,3–5/398; emphasis added)

Essence’s determinateness is a moment within essence. What determines it is a process that takes place entirely within essence, which Hegel evokes with the metaphor of “shining within itself.” (Hegel also describes essence as a “*movement from nothing to nothing*” [WL 6:24/GW 11:249,15/400], in order to emphasize the absence of free-standing “others” that would be the starting and ending points of its movement.) Essence’s determinateness is “infinite” not in the sense that it goes beyond essence (which is something that Hegel is making very clear that it does not do), but rather in the sense that it is built around negativity, “identity with itself,” “being-in-and-for-self,” and so on; that is, essence’s determinateness is built around a kind of proto-selfhood, which enables it to supersede the domain of negation, finitude, and indifference, in something very like the way that true infinity superseded finitude: through a double movement that *includes* it, while *going beyond* it. It is important to see that this proto-selfhood is not “subjective” in the sense of being a mere content in a mind or minds (which are taken to exist independently of their contents), or in the sense that there is no basis for regarding it as objective. There is plenty of room, within Hegel’s conception, for distinctions between subjective illusion and objective reality, as he will make clear in the remainder of the Doctrine of Essence.

But the essence of that objective reality will always be the negativity or being-in-and-for-self that I am describing as a proto-selfhood.

How does the position that Hegel has arrived at constitute a critique of the immediately "given," in scepticism and idealism (and empiricism) – the topic with which Hegel began his discussion of shine? Hegel's argument criticizes the immediately "given" by showing (as I've just been saying) that in the context of "essence," as arrived at by the Doctrine of Being's successive critiques of quality, quantity, and measure, the only intelligible conception of an "immediate" is of a "mediated or reflected immediacy . . . – being not as being, but . . . as a moment," within essence (WL 6:22/GW 11:248,33–36/397). So-called immediacy, Hegel concludes, is always mediated by what it is a moment within; so that, as he says in an often-quoted remark in the introduction to the Doctrine of Being, "There is nothing in heaven or in nature or spirit or anywhere else that does not equally contain both immediacy and mediation, so that these two determinations reveal themselves to be *unseparated* and *inseparable* and the opposition between them to be a nullity" (WL 5:66/GW 21:54, 23–28/68).¹¹ This is the upshot of the double-sided argument that I analyzed earlier, with its conclusion that negativity is immediacy and immediacy is negativity. A defender of scepticism or empiricism or

11 Some scholars have taken Hegel's new treatment of "immediacy," in his chapter on "Shine," as representing a change in the *meaning* that he had previously attached to immediacy, in the course of the Doctrine of Being, and thus as raising doubts about whether the argument that he presents in the Doctrines of Being and Essence is internally consistent (see Dieter Henrich, "Hegels Logik der Reflexion," in his *Hegel im Kontext* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971], pp. 111–112, and Christian Iber, *Die Metaphysik absoluter Relationalität* [Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1990], pp. 91–93). However, Hegel remarks in his introduction to the Doctrine of Being that "simple immediacy is itself a term deriving from the analysis of reflection [*ein Reflexionsausdruck*] and refers to the difference [*Unterschied*] from what is mediated. So when it is truly [i.e., more correctly] expressed, this simple immediacy is *pure being*" [and not "simple immediacy"] (WL 5:68/GW 21:55/69). What he is saying is that immediacy is a concept that is not *defined* in the Doctrine of Being, but only – via the concept of "difference" (between the immediate and the mediated) – in the analysis of "reflection" that is part of the Doctrine of Essence. So even if "immediacy" always *seemed*, in the Doctrine of Being, to be associated (say) with ontological independence and simplicity, we should be prepared for the possibility that these associations were *coincidental*, due only to the special subject matter of the Doctrine of Being, and are not (and never were) features of the concept of immediacy itself. This, I think, is what Hegel's introduction to Essence, now, is telling us is the case, which is why he can introduce a "new" analysis of the concept of immediacy, in the Doctrine of Essence, without altering a meaning that the concept previously had. If this is what he is doing, there is room for him to analyze "immediacy" now in a way that does not entail ontological independence or simplicity. He is providing an account of the reality that appeared to us, in the Doctrine of Being, in a misleading way.

transcendental idealism who wants to reply that her conception of the “given” (as, for example, in Kant’s “sensible intuitions”) does not make it an instance of quality, quantity, measure, or “negativity,” so that Hegel’s conclusion does not apply to it, will have to explain what category her “given” does fall within, and how that category differs from those that Hegel has analyzed, in such a way as to escape his criticisms of them and his conclusion. With regard to Kant, in particular: If my argument in the third paragraph of this section is correct – that Kant’s conception of the role of sensible “intuitions” in knowledge depends upon ascribing some sort of immediate determinacy to those intuitions, when they are taken by themselves – then this argument in “Shine” for the conclusion that immediacy must be negativity, and thus must be mediated, seems to represent a significant objection to Kant’s conception. The crux of Hegel’s objection to Kant, on this point, is in his argument that by relating to itself as something negative in comparison to being – the relating that it does by exhibiting its nullity overtly (*an ihm*) – shine (the “immediately given”) becomes a self-standing negativity, or (in effect) thought or subjectivity, and thus is necessarily complex and mediated, rather than simply immediate. Hegel is describing the phenomenon of “givenness” as itself, by its very existence, embodying thought. *By presenting itself as “given” to a subject* (rather than as an independently existing reality), *the “given” takes a stand about its own nature, and thus constitutes a thought.* But the nature of a *thought* is that it seeks coherence with itself, and thus is mediated, rather than simply being “given.” In this way, the idea of “givenness” itself undermines the process of reduction to something immediate and prior to thought, of which it is generally (though, in Kant’s case, not unambiguously) supposed to be a part. As Hegel says in introducing the Concept, “In the order of nature, intuition or being are undoubtedly first, or are a condition for the Concept, but they are not on that account the absolutely unconditioned; on the contrary, their reality is superseded in the Concept and with it, also, the shine they possessed as the conditioning reality” (WL 6:260/GW 12:22,39–5/588). We saw, in the argument to true infinity in Being, one way in which the “natural” can be superseded, and here in Shine we see another. (Both supersessions evidently generate as their outcome something that is akin to thought.) Any comprehensive assessment of Hegel’s critique of Kant, on the issue of concept versus intuition, must identify and evaluate this argument.¹²

12 This objection to Kant’s conception of sensible intuitions as immediately determinate is one that Paul Guyer does not consider in the important papers (which I cited in note 2

A thorough-going defender of egoism who seeks to avoid Hegel's conclusions in the Doctrine of the Concept by cutting Hegel's argument short at the beginning of Essence, will also have to explain how Hegel's criticisms of quantity and measure could be dealt with without accepting the revised conception of being or determinateness, as "self-standingness" and negativity, that Hegel takes to be the only available recourse at this point. Doing this will be especially difficult for an egoist who is aware of the way in which selfhood, normativity, or going beyond contingent finite inclinations, is implicit in her conception of the "ego's" practical reasoning, insofar as the ego's preoccupation with *itself* (its *own* self-preservation, its satisfaction of its *own* desires), as its defining concern, already involves going beyond mere inertia or mere response to a desire, as such, toward an orientation to selfhood. Hegel's argument against the supposed immediacy of "shine," and for the conclusion that shine is actually negativity and "essence," is an argument not only against prior idealisms, and so on (as epistemological positions), but also against theories of practical reasoning as the pursuit of desire-satisfaction, insofar as such theories overlook the role of selfhood, and thus of thought, in their own conception of practical reasoning, when they presume that an "ego's" preoccupation with itself (with what is its "own") requires no special explanation. Hegel's argument shows how selfhood – and thus, implicitly, the project of going beyond finite inclinations – is already implicit in having a desire that one relates to as deserving one's attention because it is one's *own* desire.

There is no denying that Hegel's conception of essence as a kind of proto-selfhood is a challenging and (no doubt, to many people) an outlandish one. It embodies, implicitly, the identity of subject and object, or the primacy of the (subject-) Concept, that will become explicit at the end of the Doctrine of Essence. (That is why it is important to get a clear understanding of essence right away, since we can't hope to understand the Concept, and the transition to it, without understanding what that transition proceeds from.) I hope I have said enough about the nature of "essence" and the problems that it's supposed to address to make it at least plausible that Hegel might be right in thinking that it is, in fact, the only available recourse, here. To make Hegelian idealism, *in general*,

to Chapter 3) in which he defends Kant's dualism of concept and intuition against some of Hegel's criticisms. For some of the history of this debate, see 3.21 and, on other aspects of Paul Guyer's critique, note 58 to that section of Chapter 3.

plausible, I recommend again the thought articulated in “Quality,” that something that is self-determining is more real, because it is more self-sufficient, than something that is not; together with the experience that we seem to have, of being more self-determining at some times than at others, so that it’s not unreasonable to regard the “ought,” and self-determination through the transcendence of finitude, as real possibilities. I also find persuasive the additional argument that I have been teasing out of the chapter on “Shine,” that givenness, as such, already involves thought, so that the idea of a *simply* “given” set of sensible intuitions is incoherent. We find the idea of a simply “given” set of sensible intuitions unproblematic only because we confuse the occurrence of sensation as a physical process (which presents no particular problem, in the present context) with the occurrence of a cognitive input, something having meaning or content. It is as the latter that “shine” presents itself as a “nullity,” something dependent entirely upon the subject, and thus presents itself as a thought, and thus as non-“immediate.”

4.8. Essence as Reflection

“Reflection” is Hegel’s term for shine that is no longer viewed as immediate, but rather as “alienated from its immediacy” (WL 6:24/GW 11:249,28/399), by the arguments that we have been considering. Hegel describes this reflection as a “movement of becoming and transition that remains within itself” (WL 6:24/GW 11:249,30–31/399), because – as we saw in the final block quotation in the previous section – essence’s determinateness is entirely within essence, it is a moment of essence. It is “reflection” not as the subjective activity of a mind (whose existence is prior to that of the activity), but rather as an objective event or process, constituting reality, which is “reflective” in that it is reflected off (as it were) the inner surface of essence, because what it creates is a moment of essence, rather than something other than essence.

This “reflection” takes three forms: It is “positing” [*setzende*], “external,” or “determining” reflection. For Fichte, who popularized the term, “positing” (*Setzen*) is always an activity of the I, or the self. Hegel initially approaches positing not from the side of that which *posits* but from the side of that which is *posited*: “positedness, immediacy purely as determinacy or as reflecting itself” (WL 6:26/GW 11:251,31–33/401; emphasis added). This “reflecting itself” he also refers to as the “*return* of the negative into itself” (*ibid.*): Because reflection is entirely within

essence, there is no "other" on hand (as there was in Determinate Being) to determine the something through negation, so the determining that occurs, in shine, implies a "return" (that is, a return to essence itself, rather than, as in Determinate Being, a "transition" to an other). This "return" implies the sense that what is returned into – namely, essence – is in some way responsible for, or creates ("posits") the immediate. *However*, Hegel now points out – in an argument that is crucial for his entire account of "reflection" – that as a "return," immediacy is non-immediate, and thus the negative of itself; but reflection *supersedes* the negative of itself (because as essence it cannot create an "other" that will stand over against itself, on pain of falling back into Being's pattern of transition into the "other," and thus failing to be essence); so reflection *supersedes its "positing,"* the activity by which it (as essence) thought of itself as creating the immediate (WL 6:26–27/GW 11:251,13–18/401). The relationship that reflection puts in the place of that positing of the immediate, in order to supersede it, Hegel calls "positing *in advance*" (*Voraussetzen*) (also often translated as "presupposing"). "Positing in advance" suggests positing something as pre-existing or independent, rather than as created by oneself. "Reflection into itself," Hegel then says, "is essentially the positing in advance of that from which it is the return" (WL 6:27/GW 11:251,27–28/401): It regards that from which it is the return as independent of itself, so as not (contrary to its nature as "essence") to have *created* something that is independent of ("other" than) itself.

Positing the immediate in advance *as* something *not* posited, however, makes reflection "determined" (WL 6:28/GW 11:252,26/402) – determined by its relationship to this other which is not posited. A reflection of this kind, Hegel calls "external reflection" (*ibid.*). Examining it more closely, Hegel writes that external reflection

is immediately . . . the superseding of this, its positing; for it posits the immediate *in advance*: in negating, it is the negating of this, its negating (1). But in doing so it is immediately just as much *positing*, superseding the immediate that is negative in relation to it; and this immediate, from which it seemed to start as from something alien, *is* only in this, its [external reflection's] starting (2).

(WL 6:29/GW 11:253,33–39/403–404)

Positing reflection posits something immediate, and thus "negates" this immediate thing, by making it depend on its relation to external reflection; but then as external reflection, it supersedes its own positing

of the immediate, by positing it “in advance,” as something that is not posited. This superseding negates the initial negating (1). In positing the immediate thing as something that does not depend upon it, and thus negating its original negating, external reflection “supersedes the immediate that is negative in relation to it”; but superseding negation, in this way, *is precisely the task of essence or reflection, as such*, and thus external reflection’s doing this is itself a way of *positing* the thing (compare WL 6:26–27/GW 11:251,15–18/401). So the immediate that seemed to constitute an “alien” starting point for it (because it posited this immediate “in advance,” as something that is not posited by it), is nevertheless posited by it (2)! Thus it is evident, Hegel says, that “external reflection is not [merely] external, but just as much the immanent reflection *of immediacy itself*” (WL 6:30/GW 11:254,10–11/404; emphasis added).

This argument works because in its effort to categorize the immediate thing as something that does not depend upon it in any way (the effort that Hegel calls “positing *in advance*”), so as to avoid putting itself in the position of *creating* something that is independent of itself and thus negative in relation to and therefore *dependent upon* itself, external reflection is doing the fundamental task of reflection or essence as such, which is to leave the logic of Being behind it by “superseding the immediate that is negative in relation to” itself. That it does this by acknowledging (“positing in advance”) the existence of something that is independent of itself does not alter this fact. We may tend to assume that “idealism” will involve declaring the dependence of specific objects of knowledge on the knower, or in this case, of what is posited on the “positor,” essence. But what Hegel argues here is that a true positor – one whose positing is understood in a way that is in keeping with the argument of the Doctrine of Being – will do everything possible to make what it “posits” independent of itself; that acknowledging the independent existence of the posited (positing it “in advance”) is the most that it can do to that end; but that doing that amounts, in fact, to the “immanent reflection *of immediacy itself*,” insofar as it reflects the lesson of the analysis of immediacy as being (in the Doctrine of Being), that because “independently existing” things are logically determined by their contrasts with each other (by their “negation” of each other or their “limit” in relation to each other), the only way for something to be truly independent is for it to go “beyond” or “into” itself, in the manner of infinity or essence, and thus to understand itself in terms of reflection and positing.

So the “externality” of external reflection, in relation to the immediate – the presumption that what essence posits “in advance” is in fact *external to essence* – has been superseded (WL 6:30/GW 11:253,5–6/404).¹³ The importance of Hegel’s critique and superseding of “external reflection” can hardly be overstated. They will be repeated in new forms within his account of the “reflection-determinations”: as the critique and superseding of mere “diversity” (*Verschiedenheit*) via Opposition, Contradiction and Ground; in the Doctrine of the Concept as the critique and superseding of “mechanism” via Chemism, Teleology, Life, and Cognition; in the *Philosophy of Nature*, as the critique and superseding of mere “side-by-sideness” (*Aussereinander*) in space and time via natural individuality, natural subjectivity, and Spirit; and in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, as the critique and superseding of the dividedness of Consciousness by Self-consciousness and Recognition. Taken together, these critiques and supersedings constitute Hegel’s reply to rational egoism, the challenge that we saw him posing for himself at the end of “Quality.” So it is vital that we understand how they work. His critique of external reflection, as we saw, depends crucially on his prior account of determinate being and negativity, when it identifies external reflection’s project of “positing in advance” as *itself a form of negativity*, of *essence or positing*, and thus not as assuming something “alien” to reflection, but rather as the “immanent reflection of immediacy itself.” It’s only because negativity, essence, and positing have preceded external reflection, that external reflection can be criticized and superseded in this way. So Hegel’s criticism of the “common-sense” ontology that is represented by external reflection is effective only in this context, which he has constructed for it. Critics of Hegel’s critique of common sense (of what he calls “the understanding,” *Verstand*) are often frustrated by what seem like undefended assumptions, in his various statements of that critique.¹⁴ The critique that we are looking at here does in fact presuppose a great deal: It presupposes the whole critique of immediacy in

13 Hegel makes the same point – that external reflection is also the immanent reflection of immediacy itself – in his Remark on external reflection, when he says that Kant’s concept of determining reflection (in the *Critique of Judgment*) in fact contains “the concept of absolute reflection; for the universal, the principle or rule and law to which it advances in its determining, counts as the essence of that immediate which forms the starting point; and this immediate therefore counts as a nullity, and it is only the return from it, its determining by reflection, that is the positing of the immediate in accordance with its *true being*” (WL 6:31/GW 11:254/405; emphasis added).

14 See note 17 for a couple of examples.

the Doctrine of Being. It doesn't address common sense conceptions simply "as such," in their more or less familiar forms; rather, it addresses them in the context of, and understood from the point of view of, the critique of common sense immediacy that has already been carried out in the Doctrine of Being. We shouldn't be surprised, then, that when it is isolated from that context and that point of view, the critique of external reflection (and thus of common sense, or the "understanding") is not immediately convincing.

The idea of essence as negativity, and thus as a proto-subjectivity that determines itself or "posits" an immediate that is independent of it and yet somehow superseded within it, as Hegel's critique of external reflection requires, has obvious theological overtones. As with true infinity, essence and reflection are certainly another stage in Hegel's analysis of and proof of God. The theological overtones will be even stronger later in Essence, with the Absolute, Actuality, and Absolute Necessity. The Concept and the Idea present the most explicit theology in the WL, and will provide the best point at which to assess the WL's contribution to theology.

Emerging from his critique of external reflection, and superseding (preserving what was true in) it, Hegel's third and final attempt at defining reflection will be "determining reflection," which he describes as "the unity of positing and external reflection" (WL 6:32/GW 11:255/405). It shares with positing reflection the idea that essence is, somehow, active: that it should be understood in terms of an activity such as "shining" or "positing." But with external reflection it shares "absolute positing in advance; that is, the repelling of reflection from itself, or the positing of the determinateness *as determinateness of itself*" (WL 6:33/GW 11:256,8–10/406). Reflection "repels itself from itself" by taking the form of the acknowledgment (the "positing in advance") of something completely independent of itself – of a "determinateness of itself" (as opposed to a determinateness through a relationship to an other).

This combination with external reflection turns "positedness" into "reflection-determination" (*Reflexionsbestimmung*) – that is, into a process of determination (introduction of determinateness) that embodies the "self-equality" (WL 6:34/GW 11:256,30/407) that is characteristic of essence and reflection, as opposed to the "transitory" (*ibid.*) character, the proneness to transition into the other, that is characteristic of determinateness in Being. Reflection-determination, Hegel says, is "positedness as negation, negation that has negatedness as its ground;

it is therefore not unequal within itself" (WL 6:33–34/GW 11:256,27–29/407), in the way that the "transitory" determinateness of quality is unequal within itself. Reflection-determination is positedness as *negation*, because it involves acknowledging determinateness as something completely independent of itself, which sets up an externality of something and other, which (according to the analysis in the Doctrine of Being) are determined as each other's negation (contrast). Reflection-determination's negation has negatedness as its *ground*, in the sense that the underlying unity (of internal and external reflection, or of essence itself) is not "being" (as it was in the case of quality, something and other), and thus something contrasted to negation, but rather is essence as negativity, negation of negation (see WL 6: 19/GW 11:245,6–10/395, and 4.7). So reflection-determination is negation "all the way down," and in that sense has "self-equality" and, in fact, "persistence" (*Bestehen*) (WL 6:34/GW 11:256,33/407).

The condition of this homogeneity and persistence, however – of the fact that "the determinate has *subjected to itself* its transitoriness and its mere positedness, or has bent its reflection-into-other back into reflection-into-self" (WL 34/GW 11:256–257,39–2/407; emphasis added), in this way – is that "determining reflection is *reflection that has gotten outside itself*; essence's equality with itself has become *lost* in the negation, which is the dominant factor" (WL 6:34/GW 11:257,4–6/407; emphasis added). That is, no sooner has reflection's "self-equality" been celebrated as a step beyond the transitoriness of quality and being than it is declared to be dominated by the negative relation, the non-equality, between positedness (the contribution of positing reflection) and the acknowledgement of independence (the contribution of external reflection). This duality or non-equality will structure all of the subsequent stages of the Doctrine of Essence, in the contrasts (for instance) between ground and grounded, between necessity and contingency, between substance and accident.¹⁵ At each stage, there will be a "going together with itself," comparable to the "bending back into reflection-into-self" that Hegel has just described; but that going together or bending back will be fully successful only in the (transition to the) triplicity of the Concept.

15 Klaus Schmidt points out this structure in his *Georg W. F. Hegel, Wissenschaft der Logik – Die Lehre vom Wesen: Ein einführender Kommentar* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997), p. 57.

4.9. The Reflection-Determinations: Identity and Difference

In the way that we described in the previous section, “reflection” is determinate: Its ultimate form, “determining reflection,” yields a “determinateness that is *essential*, not transitory” (WL 6:34; GW 11:256, 30/407). Hegel’s next chapter, “The Essentialities or Reflection-Determinations,” analyzes reflection’s determinateness – much as Chapter 2 of “Quality” analyzed the determinateness of *Dasein*. Reflection’s determinateness takes the form, first, of “Identity,” second, of “Difference,” and third, of “Contradiction,” which resolves itself into its “Ground” or underlying reason.

Unlike the sameness (self-equality) of quality in determinate being, which was accomplished through “transition” into other qualities, essential identity is one that “produces itself to unity”; as negativity and reflection, it is “pure production out of and in itself: *essential* identity.” (WL 6:39/GW 11:260,14–16/411). Hegel now argues that essential identity is necessarily *difference*, as well. Essential identity, Hegel says,

has not arisen through a *relative* negating that would have taken place outside it. . . . On the contrary, being and every determinateness of being has superseded itself not relatively, but in itself; and this one-fold [*einfache*] negativity of being in itself is identity itself.

(WL 6:39/GW 11:260,17–23/411–412; emphasis added)

Identity, as such, requires some form of negation: some form of exclusion of what the item in question is not. But the type of negation that was characteristic of being and quality – namely, “relative” negation, negation as a relation to something “other” – has been superseded by the argument of the Doctrine of Being. So “*essential* identity” will not involve a relation to an other. Instead,

As absolute negation [, essential identity] is the negation that immediately negates itself: a nonbeing and difference [*Unterschied*] that vanishes in its arising, or a differentiating [*Unterscheiden*] by which nothing is differentiated, but which immediately collapses into itself. Differentiating is the positing of nonbeing as the nonbeing of the other. But the nonbeing of the other is a superseding of the other and thus of differentiating itself. Here, then, differentiating is present as self-related negativity, as a nonbeing that is the nonbeing of itself, a nonbeing that has its nonbeing

not in an other but in itself. What is present, therefore, is self-related, reflected difference, or pure, *absolute difference*.

(WL 6:40/GW 11:261–262, 23–36/412–413)

Identity is absolute negation because it's not relative negation, not negation as a relation to something "other." So in order to negate something, it "immediately negates *itself*." This makes it a non-being (something merely posited: see WL 6:21/GW 11:257, 19–23/397, and compare "nullity," 4.7), or a difference that vanishes as soon as it arises. But it is, nevertheless, a difference! In fact, Hegel goes on to argue, it is a pure, *absolute* difference inasmuch as its non-being is an overt feature of it: It relates to itself as non-being. So identity has turned out to be absolute difference. "Difference," here, is simply spelling out the process of reflection or internal determination by which essence moves (as Hegel said earlier) "from nothing to nothing": Since this process is in an important way "internal" to essence (it doesn't involve an "other" in the sense that was developed in Being), the difference between the essence that determines itself – the "identity" – and what it determines itself into has to "vanish." At the same time, this difference (or differentiating) is what essence is all about, inasmuch as essence has to be "in and for itself," has to determine itself (be "for itself") in order to be the self-supersession of its determinateness (see 4.6). And insofar as this difference relates to itself as what it really is (that is, as non-being), and is self-related negativity, it is everything that identity was, but more explicitly, and thus it threatens to replace identity.

This is, in fact, the conclusion that Hegel draws in the next paragraph: Since identity involves an "internal repulsion" by which essence and determinateness are opposed to each other, and this repulsion is immediately "taken back into itself" insofar as it's seen as the implementation of what essence, as such, had to be in any case, identity is a "difference that is identical with itself." But difference can be identical with itself only if it is absolute difference, absolute non-identity. "So *identity* is overtly [*an ihr selbst*] absolute *non-identity*" (WL 6:40–41/GW 11:262, 37–8/413; emphasis added).

To understand this first and most fundamental conclusion of Hegel's controversial and little-understood account of the Reflection-Determinations, it's vital to see how it follows from his account of what essence is, and how essence relates to negativity and true infinity. As I indicated, the connection flows through his initial account of essence as "being-in-and-for-self" (WL 6:14/GW 11:242, 24–25/390). What was

left of being at the end of the Doctrine of Being was (1) its ambition to be “in itself,” and (2) the self-supersessions of its successive determinatenesses (as quality, quantity, and measure), these self-supersessions being the way in which it is “for itself.” Essence, therefore, must likewise be “for itself,” and in order to do so it must be the self-supersession of some kind of determinate *Dasein*. (Essence “itself is this negativity, the self-supersession of other-being and determinateness” [WL 6:14/ GW 11: 242,30–31/390].) As such a self-supersession, essence is very much a *process* rather than an immediately given identity. (This is the main thing that Hegel’s regular references to essence’s “negativity” are supposed to remind us of.) And “difference” (as “differentiation”) seems to exhibit this “process” character more effectively than “identity,” as such, can exhibit it.¹⁶ Both as process in general, and as the self-supersession of determinateness in particular, essence very much resembles true infinity, understood as the (ongoing) self-supersession of the finite. We will bear this “process” character well in mind as we examine the other “Reflection-Determinations.” If we understand “diversity” (*Verschiedenheit*), “opposition” (*Gegensatz*), and “contradiction” (*Widerspruch*) as successive ways of understanding *not* “reality” (or discourse about reality) “as such,” but rather the *specific conception* of reality that Hegel has now arrived at – namely, reality as the “reflection” relation between essence as positor and essence as posited, or between essence as such and essence as determinateness – we will be able to avoid a great deal of confusion into which readers of these sections tend to fall.¹⁷

16 Christian Iber provides a helpful discussion of ways in which Hegel’s account of identity responds to and criticizes those of Fichte and Schelling (as well as their predecessors), in his *Metaphysik absoluter Relationalität. Eine Studie zu den beiden ersten Kapiteln von Hegels Wesenslogik* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1990), pp. 293–296.

17 Klaus Düsing *accuses* Hegel of precisely what I have just praised him for: “That identity is, in itself, difference, can . . . only be *presupposed* on the basis of the contradictory structure of reflection” (*Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik* [Bonn: Bouvier, 1976], p. 219; emphasis added). Similarly, regarding Hegel’s later conclusion that “contradiction” has a “positive” outcome, Düsing writes: “So Hegel did not *prove* the positive outcome of contradiction by, for example, overcoming finite thought; rather, he already *presupposed* [this outcome], in his concept of reflection” (p. 226; emphasis added). In both of these statements, and throughout his rich and penetrating book, Düsing overlooks the way in which Hegel’s concept of reflection sums up the outcome of the *argument* of the Doctrine of Being (which is an argument that Düsing does not examine, as such). Christian Iber appears to lean toward a similar criticism of Hegel’s account of the reflection-determinations when he describes Hegel’s transition from diversity to “opposition” as depending upon a “specifically idealistic . . . presupposition” (*Metaphysik absoluter Relationalität* [Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1990], pp. 372–373), which Iber apparently does not take Hegel to have supported by argument. Iber, like Düsing, does

4.10. The Reflection-Determinations: Difference

Difference in itself, Hegel writes, is "self-related" difference; thus it is "the difference not from an other, but *of itself from itself; it is not itself, but its other*" (WL 6:46–47/GW 11:266,20–23/417; emphasis added). This is because essence is essence only insofar as it determines itself, and thus becomes its "other" (using this Doctrine of Being term loosely, here). Here, again, Hegel echoes his argument, in "Quality," that finite being can be itself only by going beyond its finitude, into something that is (to that extent) its "other." Hegel continues:

But what is different from difference is identity. So difference is itself and identity. Both together constitute difference; [difference] is the whole and its moment . . . as identity equally is its whole and its moment. – This is to be regarded as the essential nature of reflection and as the *determined original ground of all activity* [*Tätigkeit*] and *self-movement*.

(WL 6:47; GW 11:266,23–34/417)

"What is different from difference is identity" – that is, the concept of identity can be *constructed from that of difference*, by applying difference to itself. (Just as, in "Quality," the concept of the "something" was constructed by applying negation to itself.) So difference is both itself *and* identity: It is "the whole and its moment" in that it is "reflection as a whole" (as identity was originally introduced: WL 6:40/GW 11:261,22/412), and also the subordinate "moment" of reflection that was initially called "difference." Identity, likewise, is its whole and its moment, in that it is both "reflection as a whole," which (as we saw in 4.9) emerged as absolute difference, and also a sort of common sense "*determination of identity*" that is reestablished "*against*" this absolute difference, and is consequently a moment *within* reflection as a whole (WL 6:41; GW 11:262,9–15/413).

Identity gave way to difference, and difference (reapplied to itself) reconstitutes identity. Both of them exhibit the pattern of being both "the whole" and "its moment." What this pattern (that both difference and identity are both the whole and its moment) means is that self-specification or self-determination is the nature of reflection as such, so that neither the "whole" nor identity/difference as its "moment" is intelligible by itself; they are, in effect, indistinguishable. This pattern

not identify the way in which Hegel's concept of reflection embodies an "idealism" for which Hegel has, in fact, offered an explicit argument, in "Quality" (see 3.4–3.16) and the rest of the Doctrine of Being.

is the “determined original ground of all activity and self-movement” insofar as activity and self-movement are manifestations of the process of self-specification in which essence, as such, is engaged. Activity and self-movement manifest this process insofar as they are manifestations of *selfhood*, which is what essence, reflection, and the reflection-determinations (as the successors to negativity and true infinity) are about. The process of self-specification or self-determination within essence differs from the (in a broad sense) activity or self-movement that were embodied in the something and in true infinity in that these latter were developed from determinate or finite being – from the more determinate – toward transcendence, whereas the development within essence proceeds (as it were) from transcendence toward determinate or finite being. But the relationship that’s being established in each case is substantially the same; only the sequence of the argument differs.

Difference now has two “moments,” difference and identity, each of which is “reflected into itself” – that is, posited as it is in itself (which is what made each its own moment, as well as the whole). The situation that is composed of two such moments, Hegel calls “diversity” (*Verschiedenheit*) (WL 6:47/GW 11:267,5–12/418). In diversity, the two terms “are not *overtly* (*an ihnen selbst*) different, so the difference is *external* to them” (WL 6:48/GW 11:267,1–3/418; emphasis added). That is, their difference doesn’t concern them, isn’t part of their identity, but is purely external to them. “Identity *falls apart* overtly,” in this way, “into diversity, because as absolute difference it posits itself in itself as the negative of itself,” which is identity, and identity – understood as indifference [*Gleichgültigkeit*] toward others – is the “foundation and element” of what is differentiated (WL 6:47/GW 11:267,14–22/418). If difference “is not itself, but its other” (WL 6:47/GW 11:266,23/417), it is an identity that, in itself, embodies no difference – and this is (sheer) “diversity.” The relation between the resulting diverse items is the determining reflection that Hegel described as having “gotten outside itself” (WL 6:34/GW 11:257,4–5/407) – a return (in effect) to the “external reflection” that he discussed earlier (on both, see 4.8). Hegel’s discussion of diversity and its successor, “opposition,” will retrace the path of his earlier discussion of external reflection and its successor, determining reflection, in a way that will put this type of externality behind it.

Since “diversity” – in which entities are simply “external” to each other – is evidently a close relative of (though not identical to) the “atomism” that resulted from the downfall of true infinity, Hegel’s treatment of diversity will clearly be an important part of his overall response

to atomism and egoism. Before we plunge into his discussion, it will be useful, as I suggested at the end of 4.9, to remember that the “diversity” that Hegel is discussing, here, is not just anything that one might picture under that title; rather, it is the diversity, specifically, *of the moments of “absolute difference,”* which in turn is the latest embodiment of “reflection,” of “essence,” and (in general) of “negativity.” Thus, although Hegel intends his discussion of diversity and its transition into opposition to serve as a critique of what we might call a “common sense” ontology of “diverse” entities (since if “diversity” isn’t an adequate account of the relation between the moments of absolute difference, it can’t very well be regarded as the basic relation between entities in general), it should not be surprising if his critique is not enough, by itself, to persuade advocates of “common sense” ontologies to follow Hegel by substituting “opposition” for the diversity to which they are presently wedded; for they may well not understand that diversity in the way that Hegel, coming from the Doctrine of Being, understands it. To stand a decent chance of persuading them, one would have to bring to bear the whole argument of the Doctrine of Being (as well as the first two chapters of “Essence”). As with many other such discussions in the *Science of Logic*, this one must be taken not as a discussion of familiar concepts taken simply at “face value,” but rather as a challenge to the defenders of familiar concepts to formulate them in a way that would make them both coherent, in themselves, and immune to the arguments of the *Science of Logic* as a whole.

4.11. The Reflection-Determinations: From Diversity to Opposition

Hegel’s first point about “diversity” is that in its world, “reflection” survives in two forms: as “reflection in itself” (*Reflexion an sich*) and as “external reflection” (*äußere Reflexion*). “Reflection in itself” is a name for identity “determined as indifferent [*gleichgültig*] toward difference,” and thus as ignoring the interconnection of identity and difference that was developed in Hegel’s initial discussion of identity; so it is “reflection” only in a minimal, potential sense (“in itself”). “External reflection” is the “determined difference” between the two moments of absolute difference – this determining being understood (naturally) as one “toward which the reflection in itself is indifferent” (WL 6:49/WL 11:268,27–39/419). Now Hegel announces that “reflection in itself”

or external identity is *likeness* [*Gleichheit*], and external reflection or external difference is *unlikeness* [*Ungleichheit*]:

Likeness, it is true, is identity, but only as a positedness, an identity that is not in and for itself. Similarly, *unlikeness* is difference, but as an external difference that is not in and for itself the difference of the unlike itself. Whether or not something is like something else does not concern either the one or the other [*geht weder das eine noch das andere an*]; . . . identity or nonidentity, as likeness or unlikeness, is from the point of view of a third [*ist die Rücksicht eines Dritten*] that falls outside them.

(WL 6:49–50/GW 11:268,4–13/419–420)

Identity and difference that were “in and for themselves” were, of course, the pure identity and absolute difference that we began with, by comparison with which likeness and unlikeness are merely external. The “point of view of a third” is an external reflection, a process of “comparison” [*Vergleichung*], that relates the diverse items to likeness and unlikeness. It “separates” likeness and unlikeness from each other by relating them to one and the same substratum “by means of ‘inso-fars,’ ‘sides,’ and ‘points of view’”; the diverse items are “*on one side* like each other, but *on the other side* unlike, and *insofar* as they are like, *to that extent* they are not unlike” (WL 6:50/GW 11:269,30–36/420). In this way, the “point of view of a third” prevents likeness from directly contradicting unlikeness, in the diverse items. This is probably all so familiar, from our “common sense” ways of talking – from “the understanding” – that it seems transparently obvious and uncontroversial. But Hegel says that “this holding apart of likeness and unlikeness” is, in fact, “their *destruction*,” because

through their mutual indifference, likeness is only related to itself, and unlikeness equally is related to itself and is a point of view and a reflection for itself; so each is *like* itself; the difference has vanished, since they have no determinateness *over against each other*; in other words each, now, is *only likeness*.

(WL 6:50–51/GW 11:269,4–16/420; emphasis added)

Hegel’s point is that if “likeness” and “unlikeness” are taken as mere givens, with no determinateness “over against *each other*,” there is no effective way of distinguishing them from each other, and they are both, in effect, mere “likeness” (to themselves). Pure identity and absolute difference each yielded a determinate relationship between identity and difference; diversity, so far, has not. How can such a relationship

be arrived at, starting from diversity? Hegel points out that such a relationship is implicit in their relationship to the “third,” the “comparer” [*das Vergleichende*]: “The comparer goes from likeness to unlikeness, and from unlikeness back to likeness, and therefore lets the one vanish in the other” (as we just saw), “and is, in deed [*in der Tat*], *the negative unity of both*” (WL 6:51/GW 11:269/421). This is not just a subjective doing, Hegel insists: “This negative unity is in deed *the nature of* likeness and unlikeness themselves” (ibid.; emphasis added). The “deed” of comparison is, in effect, an essential feature of the diverse items being compared, and of their likeness and unlikeness. Through it, they receive the determinate relationship that may allow them not to simply vanish in each other.

I have not found a commentary that takes this claim about the “deed” of comparison with the seriousness with which Hegel seems to intend it. It seems to me that Hegel’s move, here, is similar to his move, in “Quality,” of introducing the “Ought,” and thus (by implication) rational *action*, as crucial to the process of transcending the finitude of determinate being. His point there was that beings can be what they are by virtue of themselves, only insofar as they can go beyond their finitude; that beings that are capable of rational action (in accordance with an “Ought”) are capable of going beyond their finitude, and thus being what they are by virtue of themselves; and thus that a world that contains the capacity for rational action is (to some extent) capable of being what it is by virtue of itself, whereas a world that doesn’t contain that capacity, is not. His point here seems to be, similarly, that the world of “diverse” items is capable of determining those items, and likeness and unlikeness, in relation to each other, insofar as it contains the capacity for engaging in comparison. That is, a world that is capable of something like consciousness is determinate in a way that a world that lacks that capacity is not. This may sound ridiculously anthropocentric or consciousness-centric, but so (no doubt) would Hegel’s argument in “Quality,” before its logic is understood. Another parallel is his critique of external reflection, in which he argued that although “positing in advance” – positing items as entirely independent of the process of positing – was initially a “superseding of [ordinary] positing” (WL 6:29/GW 11:253,34/403), it nevertheless constituted a kind of positing because it defended (as essence and positing are supposed to do) the self-sufficiency, the non-“transitoriness” of these items, and thus it was not “external” to the immediate; rather it was the “immanent reflection of immediacy itself” (WL 6:30/GW 11:254,11/404). This

argument appealed, in effect, to the fundamental status of “negativity” and essence, to argue that an activity (namely, “positing in advance”) that could be interpreted as implementing negativity and essence, and thus achieving the kind of reality that (according to the argument of the Doctrine of Being) they represent, *should* be interpreted in that way, because the argument of the Doctrine of Being gives us reason to regard negativity and essence as the fundamental reality. Hegel’s critique of “diversity” seems to operate in the same way. It suggests a way in which diversity could solve its internal problem of how to make likeness and unlikeness determinate in relation to each other; the solution involves the presence of an action or an activity (that of comparison); and Hegel takes it to be reasonable to *assume* the presence of such an action or activity, because (1) he has established the presence of negativity and essence (as the reality that is what it is by virtue of itself); (2) negativity and essence, as “internalization” and “positing,” have the character of action or activity; and (3) it seems reasonable to take “comparison” as an instance or implementation of internalization and positing, and thus of negativity and essence. So that here again, as in the critique and superseding of external reflection, the determinate *reality* of the composite that is composed of the diverse items together with likeness and unlikeness depends upon the presence, within it, of a certain kind of action or activity, which *is* in fact present as the outcome of the argument of the Doctrine of Being. Thus it seems, again, that Hegel’s “idealism,” in his treatment of diversity, is not an external and “optional” commitment that he happens to have made; rather, it’s both a necessary premise of his argument and a premise that he has a right to, on the basis of the argument that he has given (primarily) in the Doctrine of Being.¹⁸

Hegel’s next point is that although in one sense likeness and unlikeness “vanished” into mere likeness (with themselves), there is also a sense in which they vanish into *unlikeness* with themselves. This is because in the configuration that Hegel has described, likeness belongs to the “third,” rather than to itself, so it is actually *unlike* itself; and

18 Christian Iber offers “considerations” that make Hegel’s transition from diversity to opposition “understandable” without relying on Hegel’s own “specifically idealistic” argument (*Metaphysik absoluter Relationalität* [Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1990], p. 372), but these considerations don’t seem to be sufficient to make the transition *compelling*, which is what Hegel needs it to be in order to carry out his program. I find it difficult to assess the philosophical virtues of the “metaphysics of absolute relationality” on which Iber thinks Hegel superimposed his (as Iber sees it) unfortunate and clearly indefensible “idealism.”

unlikeness, for its part, belonging to the "third," "is not the unlikeness of itself, but of something that is unlike it," and thus it is actually *like* rather than unlike (and thus it's unlike itself). Thus,

the like and the unlike are *unlike themselves*. Consequently each is this reflection: likeness, that it is itself and unlikeness, and unlikeness, that it is itself and likeness.

(WL 6:51/WL 11:269–270,38–4/421)

Very much as it turned out that "identity is overtly absolute non-identity" (WL 6:41/GW 11:262,8/413; see 4.9) and that "difference is itself and identity" (WL 6:47/GW 11:266,23–24/417; see 4.10).¹⁹ Hegel's point is that like and unlike are each understandable only as *the opposite of the other*. This is the determinateness "over against each other" that they need, and that diversity, as such, could not give them.

4.12. From Opposition to Contradiction

Once like and unlike have this determinateness, they exhibit the relationship of "opposition" (*Gegensatz*), which is "the unity of identity and diversity" (WL 6:55/GW 11:272,7/424), composed of "sides" that are "*indifferent*" toward each other (as in diversity), but are "just as much simply moments of one negative *unity*" (WL 6:52/GW 11:270,23–24/421). The archetype of "opposition" is the relationship of positive to negative, in arithmetic and in general. But the thing to remember, once again, is that opposition enters the picture as a way of making likeness and unlikeness determinate in relation to each other, and they in turn entered the picture as aspects of the relation between identity and difference, which is the relation between essence and its determinateness. So the ultimate *point* of "opposition," within the Doctrine of Essence, is to conceptualize the relation between essence and its determinateness. What it says about them is that they stand to each other in the same relation as positive stands to negative: The identity of each is the negation of the other, so that while they each stand as separate entities ("indifferent sides"), neither is thinkable without reference to the other.

¹⁹ Klaus J. Schmidt points out this and other connections, in his *Georg W. F. Hegel, Wissenschaft der Logik – Die Lehre vom Wesen: Ein einführender Kommentar* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997), p. 67.

In the way that we have been describing, each side achieves “self-standingness” (*Selbstständigkeit*) through their opposition:

Each has its own indifferent self-standingness through the fact that it has as an overt [*an ihm*] feature its relation to its other moment; thus it is the whole, self-contained opposition. As this whole, each is mediated with itself by *its other* and *contains* it.

(WL 6:64–65/GW 11:279,27–31/431)

Side A is self-standing insofar as it *contains* within itself its other (side B) and its relation to it. This makes it the “whole opposition.” In another way, however, the self-standingness of each requires the *non-being* of the other:

But it is also mediated with itself by *the non-being of its other*; thus it is a unity for itself and *excludes* the other from itself.

(WL 6:65/GW 11:279,31–34/431)

Insofar as the sides are both “beings” (*Sein*) – which they are insofar as they are “diverse” (see WL 6:55/GW 11:272,12–20/424) – side A’s “other” is likewise a being, so that for side A to be self-standing, and rely on nothing external (“external” because beings cannot be contained within each other, in the manner of “reflection”), it must treat this “other” being, side B, as a *non-being*, and *exclude* it from itself.

[Thus] the self-standing reflection-determination *excludes the other reflection-determination in the same respect in which it contains the other*, so that in its self-standingness it excludes its own self-standingness from itself. For its own self-standingness consists in the fact that it contains within itself the determination that is other than it (because only in this way can it not be a relation to something external), but it consists no less immediately in the fact that it is itself and excludes from itself the determination that is negative to it. Thus it is *contradiction*.

(WL 6:65/GW 11:279,35–7/431; emphasis added)

Side A both contains and excludes side B, in the same respect. It *contains* side B so as not to be what it is by relation to something external to it; and it *excludes* side B for the same reason: so as not to be what it is by relation to something external to it. The containment is by virtue of the structures of negativity, positing reflection, or determining reflection, while the exclusion is by virtue of the structures of being, external reflection, or diversity. The conflict between these two threads, as exhibited

within "opposition," Hegel baptizes as "contradiction." A clear instance of it can be seen, once again, in true infinity. Infinity *contains* the finite insofar as it is the finite's self-supersession, which it must be in order not to be opposed to the finite and limited by it. (This is the "negativity" dimension.) Taking the finite and the infinite as mere "beings," on the other hand (this is the dimension of being, external reflection, or diversity), they must *exclude* one another (treat each other as non-beings). Both features – being a being, and not being limited by opposition to another – are required for the infinite to be "self-standing." Thus, containment of the finite and exclusion of the finite both apply to the infinite "in the same respect" (containment by virtue, however, of the structure of negativity, and exclusion by virtue of the structure of determinate being). No doubt this is why Hegel says in one of his Remarks on contradiction that the infinite "is contradiction as it shows itself in the sphere of being" (WL 6: /GW 11:287,30/440).²⁰

As one might expect, since the "contradiction" that Hegel is analyzing results from the unstable coexistence of two threads (the one composed of negativity, positing reflection, and determining reflection, the other of being, external reflection, and diversity), it isn't final; rather, Hegel says, it "resolves itself" (WL 6:67/GW 11:280,30/433). It does this in two ways. On the one hand, insofar as it is composed of being, and so on, it resolves itself, through the "transition" or "ceaseless vanishing" of the opposed terms into each other, into "zero" (*die Null*; WL 6:67/GW 11:280,37/433). On the other hand, insofar as it is composed of negativity and positing or determining reflection, its "result is not only zero" (WL 6:67/GW 11:281,2/433), but rather, "its *ground*" or basis or reason (*seinen Grund* [WL 6:68/GW 11:282,10/434]), which

20 Readers who seek a complete account of Hegel's analysis of opposition and contradiction should supplement what I offer, here, with Michael Wolff's classic study, *Der Begriff des Widerspruchs. Eine Studie zur Dialektik Kants und Hegels* (Königstein/Taunus: Hain, 1981), which examines Hegel's account of opposition in much greater detail and gives a highly original interpretation of how his account of contradiction emerges from it (see especially pp. 146–155). I am not in a position to integrate Wolff's results fully into my discussion here, though I don't think they conflict with mine. Although he places "negativity" at the center of his analysis, as I do, Wolff's focus on Hegel's discussion of opposition and contradiction as such prevents him from discussing the role that negativity plays in Hegel's argument from *Dasein* ("determinate being") to the "something" and true infinity, and in the transition from the Doctrine of Being to the Doctrine of Essence, with the result that Wolff's book doesn't address negativity's role in the argument of the *Logic* as a whole, and its relation to the ontological questions on which my interpretation focusses. For additional detailed textual commentary, see also Christian Iber's *Metaphysik absoluter Relationalität* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1990).

is “essence as unity of the positive and the negative”: “positive identity with itself, but which at the same time relates itself to itself as negativity” (WL 6:69/GW 11:282,5–26/435). In the “ground,” each of the self-standing opposed terms perishes (*geht zugrunde*), but in doing so they also “come together with themselves” (*ibid.*) as “the ground, which contains and supports its determinations” (WL 6:79/GW 11:289,34/442).

When Hegel says that contradiction “resolves itself” into something that is not a contradiction, he may seem to agree with the usual view that the presence of contradiction is a sign of falsehood or unreality. That view would, however, be more consistent with contradiction’s resulting in “zero,” in nothing, than with the other aspect of Hegel’s account, according to which contradiction’s result is “not *only* zero,” but something called the “ground,” which we can expect (following the usual pattern in the *Logic*) to be more concrete and more real than what preceded it. If contradiction resolves itself not only into zero, but also into something that is concrete and real, then contradiction itself is not simply equivalent to zero or falsehood or unreality. This is why Hegel famously says, in his third Remark on contradiction and related issues, that “all things are in themselves contradictory,” and that conventional thinking is mistaken when it says that “there is nothing contradictory” and that contradiction is not “something present”: *ein Vorhandenes* (WL 6:74–75/GW 11:286–287/439–440). Just as being and the finite have not merely been swept aside, in the progress of the *Logic*, but rather have found their proper place as “ideal” moments within something that is more real than themselves (namely, true infinity and its successors), so also contradiction is not merely swept aside, but finds its proper place as an ideal moment within the “ground” and its successors. It is “present” in the same way that finite things are present: not as an ultimate reality, but as a necessary aspect or moment of the ultimate reality. To say that “all things are in themselves contradictory” is not to say that the ultimate reality itself is contradictory, but it is to say that “contradiction,” as Hegel has analyzed it, is a necessary aspect or moment of the ultimate reality. The point of *true* infinity was that an “infinity” that is simply opposed to the finite, is not truly infinite; and Hegel takes it as established that in any similar process of overcoming or “resolution,” such as the resolution of contradiction into the ground, the resolution can’t simply be opposed to what it resolves (on pain of being determined by what it opposes, rather than by itself), but must rather *include* what it resolves, as a moment within it. True infinity includes the finite, by being the finite’s self-supersession, and the ground

includes contradiction in precisely the same way: by being contradiction's "self-resolution." So contradiction, like the finite, has a certain reality – not the "reality" *simpliciter* that Absolute Spirit will have, but not mere unreality, either; rather, the special kind of reality that Hegel calls "ideality" (which I explained in 3.16).

Clark Butler writes that "contradictory things 'exist' not literally in that one entity has contradictory properties, but in that the assumption that it has contradictory properties may become a mental or institutional fixation," which is what he thinks Hegel is driving at with his statement that "all things are in themselves contradictory."²¹ Here, Butler seems to neglect the way in which later stages in a dialectical development or supersession don't leave what preceded them behind them, but rather incorporate it, and thus lend it a (derivative) reality. This is indispensable for understanding why Hegel thinks he needs to criticize the traditional understanding of the Law of Non-Contradiction. As traditionally understood, that "law" denies that the contradictory has any reality at all, whereas Hegel wants to maintain that the reality of Absolute Spirit, and of everything that precedes it in his system, is not intelligible except as the self-supersession of what precedes them, in each case, and thus it lends a certain important, though derivative, reality – the reality that Hegel calls "ideality" – to what precedes them. That's the sense in which the contradictory is real, at the same time that (as Hegel says) it "resolves itself." Understanding this feature of Hegel's thinking makes it possible to accept his thinking with significantly less "corrective reconstruction" than Butler feels compelled to engage in.²²

My interpretation of Hegelian "contradiction" as resulting from the unstable co-existence of two threads – one composed of negativity, positing reflection, and determining reflection, and the other composed of being, external reflection, and diversity – also makes sense of Hegel's well-known statement, in his third Remark on contradiction, that while identity, in contrast to contradiction,

is only the determination of the one-fold immediate, of dead being
[, contradiction] on the other hand is the root of all motion and vitality;

21 Clark Butler, *Hegel's Logic. Between Dialectic and History* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), p. 56.

22 Butler describes his project in this way on p. 23 of *Hegel's Logic. Between Dialectic and History*. To my defense of Hegel's position on the reality of contradiction, Butler could, of course, reply that Hegel's conception of "ideality" also needs to be "correctively reconstructed"; but he shows no sign, in his discussion of Hegel's "Quality" chapter, of seeing a problem there that would require this sort of treatment.

it is only insofar as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, has a drive [*Trieb*] and activity [*Tätigkeit*].

(WL 6:75/GW 11:286,9–13/439)

The motor of the Logic as a whole is the interaction between the two threads, in which being, external reflection, diversity, and their successors represent (so to speak) “common sense” or what Hegel calls “the understanding” (*Verstand*), and negativity, positing reflection, determining reflection, and their successors represent selfhood. Insofar as the Logic clarifies this interaction and makes it plausible, it also persuades us to interpret physical motion and life in these terms, as exhibiting the emergence of selfhood; and when we do that, we interpret the prior phase, in each case (whether it is determinate being, spurious infinity, external reflection, or diversity) as embodying a contradiction that is resolved in the subsequent phase, in which selfhood is vindicated. And consequently (as we will see in more detail in connection with Objectivity, the Idea, Life, and Nature), motion, “drive,” life, and activity all present themselves as resolving contradictions.

One final feature of Hegel’s account of contradiction that my interpretation clarifies is his somewhat notorious objection to the distinction between “contrary” and “contradictory” concepts. In a retrospective passage in the Doctrine of the Concept, Hegel writes of the “inner nullity” of the distinction that is commonly drawn between contrary and contradictory concepts, “as though what is contrary must not equally be determined as contradictory,” as he thinks he has shown, in the passages that we are studying here, that it must be (WL 6:292/GW 12:46,2–4/615). From the point of view of conventional logic, Hegel’s claim seems very strange. Why should contrary concepts – those that are opposed to each other by being opposite extremes – also necessarily be contradictory – that is, opposed to each other in such a way that anything that’s not described by one *must* be described by the other? What about the simply indifferent cases that are, say, *neither black nor white*? This is where it is vital to remember what Hegel’s *topic* is, in the Logic and, in particular, in the Doctrine of Essence. His topic in the Logic is being or reality and his topic in the Doctrine of Essence is “negativity,” as a specific conception of being or reality. That is, he is discussing everyday discourse, or everyday conceptions of “reality,” *only* insofar as they claim to employ systematically defensible conceptions of reality as such. He thinks he has demonstrated, in the chapter on “Quality,” that the ordinary conceptions of quality, reality, or

finitude are not systematically defensible, by themselves, but can only be properly employed within a context of negativity or true infinity. He has now shown, through his analysis of "diversity" and opposition, that within such a context of negativity or true infinity, the reality that is described by apparently merely "contrary" concepts will turn out to be *better* described, at a fundamental level, by contradictory concepts. The fundamental reality will be contradictory, rather than merely contrary. It's not that nothing will be neither black nor white, but rather that qualities such as black, white, and colorless are less real (less able to be what they are by virtue of themselves) than self-transcending finitude (true infinity) is, and that this self-transcending finitude embodies contradiction. So the more real, the more contradictory. This is a remarkable claim, but it is not as weird as it seems when it is taken out of context; it is backed up by the detailed argument that I have laid out.

4.13. From Reflection to Actuality

Having analyzed in considerable detail the first two chapters of the Doctrine of Essence, I will now sketch the next five chapters, so as to be able to give detailed attention, after that, to the final two chapters on "Actuality" – including necessity, substance, and causality – which are crucial for Hegel's overall account of freedom.

Insofar as the positive and negative, the "contradiction," has superseded itself or resolved itself, essence's attempt at determining itself through the "reflection-determinations" of identity, difference, opposition, and so on, has failed. So the "ground" into which contradiction resolves itself is a reflection-determination that is determinate only as "superseded determination" (WL 6:80/GW 11:291,10/444). "Reflection," Hegel says, "is *pure mediation* as such, while the ground is essence's *real mediation* with itself" (WL 6:81/GW 11:292,1–2/445): "real" because it is "*being* that is reestablished by essence: reflection's non-being, through which essence mediates itself" (WL 6:82/GW 11:292,19–20/445). As in external reflection and diversity, then, the ground is another attempt by essence to deal with itself by going outside itself, only in this case it does so by going outside "reflection" itself, to being. It does this through a series of conceptions of "ground," exhibiting increasing "externality," which culminate in "existence" (*Existenz*), in which the "heart of the matter" (*die Sache selbst*), the "truly unconditioned" (WL 6:118/GW 11:318,35/474), is "*thrown*

out into the externality of being" (WL 6:119/GW 11:319,11/475; emphasis added).²³

This immediacy, or "*essential being*" (WL 6:124/GW 11:323,13/479), the form that being takes in the context of essence, Hegel calls "existence" or "appearance" (*Erscheinung*). Existence is epitomized in the "thing" (*das Ding*), whose contradictory (WL 6:143/GW 11:337,12–14/495) "properties" or "matters" lead to its replacement by appearance, which is "not... immediate, but *reflected* existence" (WL 6:148/GW 11:341,13/499). This "reflection" takes the forms (first) of the contrast between appearance and the "in-itself,"²⁴ and then – as the "essential

²³ Hegel also says that essence "releases" an immediacy (ibid.), or being. The phrase, "thrown out [*hinausgeworfen*] into the externality of being," inevitably reminds us of Martin Heidegger's notion of the "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*) of Dasein's Being (*Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson [New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1962], p. 174; 7th German edition, p. 135). I don't know whether Hegel and Heidegger came up with this metaphor independently, or Heidegger derived it from Hegel (he doesn't give Hegel credit for it, in *Being and Time*), or they shared some third, independent source. Insofar as "Dasein," for Heidegger, refers to *human* being, in particular, Hegel's account of "existence" as "thrown out" seems to have a broader application than Heidegger's account of "thrownness" has. But as we know, the "negativity" and "essence" of which "existence" is the latest formulation are intimately connected to selfhood and freedom, and in that way to human beings, so the distance between Heidegger and Hegel on this point perhaps boils down to the fact that Hegel constructs a more explicit systematic relationship between being and (human) freedom than Heidegger does (namely, the systematic relationship that Heidegger condemns as "ontotheology").

²⁴ Since the "thing in itself" emerges, from this argument, as an aspect of "reflected existence," it "is reflected into itself and is *in itself*, only insofar as it is *external*" (WL 6:/GW 11:331,37/488; emphasis added). Hegel points out that Kant's transcendental idealism fails to grasp this feature of the "in itself," but instead "holds fast to the *abstract* thing-in-itself as an *ultimate* determination, and *opposes* to the thing-in-itself reflection or the determination and manifoldness of the properties; whereas in deed [*in der Tat*] the thing-in-itself essentially *has this external reflection as an overt feature* [*an ihm selbst*] and determines itself as a thing with its *own* determinations [or] properties [*Eigenschaften*]" (WL 6:136/GW 11:332,27–34/490; emphases altered). Rather than being "abstract" and "*ultimate*," the thing in itself is merely abstracted *from* "existence," and must be understood in that context. "Essence," the "inner" that we might have thought of as equivalent to the "thing in itself" and thus lending "ultimateness" to the thing in itself, doesn't function in that way here, precisely because essence at this point has gone over completely into the immediacy of "existence" (see WL 6:128/GW 11:326,7–16/483). Hegel's account of the "in itself," here, corresponds well to his account of freedom in connection with true infinity, since in both cases the "in itself" or the locus of freedom as such is integrated into a totality – in one case, true infinity, and in the other case, existence – of which freedom (going beyond the finite, or "in-itself"-ness) is a recognized *aspect*, rather than being a polar opposite of something that is equally valid and that appears to undermine it, as in the Kantian account of freedom. Of course, the "in itself" is a mere shred or anticipation of freedom itself, which will reemerge as such only

relation" – of the whole and its parts, force and its expression, and inner and outer. The resolution of these is "actuality" (*Wirklichkeit*), which Hegel describes as "the *unity of essence and existence*" or of "the inner and the outer" (WL 6:186/GW 11:369,4–22/529; emphasis added). Since we are still in the Doctrine of Essence, all of these concepts must still be understood as attempts at defining the relation between essence, or negativity, and its determinateness (or, put another way, between God and the world). In "existence," this agenda was temporarily suspended, as it was earlier in external reflection and diversity, but as in those cases, reflection or negativity again enters the picture with "appearance," and it is further developed through the "essential relation" and actuality, where essence or negativity or the inner is fully present, in unity with existence or the outer.

4.14. From Actuality to Absolute Necessity

The first form of "actuality" is the "absolute" as such. The absolute's content is that it "manifests itself . . . not as the expression of something inner, nor over against an other, but it is only as *the absolute manifestation of itself for itself*" (WL 6:194–195/GW 11:375/536; emphasis added). Such a manifestation requires a unity of existence or immediacy, on the one hand, and being-in-itself, ground, or reflectedness, on the other hand. This unity is actuality in the narrower sense (WL 6:201/GW 11:380,22–24/541–542). Because what is actual must be *possible*, the form that this actuality in the narrower sense initially takes is *contingency* (*Zufälligkeit*, "accidentalness"). The contingent is what is actual, but could just as well be merely possible (it is the "unity of possibility and actuality" [WL 6:205/GW 11:383,9/545]). As purely contingent (*zufällig*, "accidental"), it has no "ground," there is no reason for its actuality. (This is because contingency is an *immediate* unity of immediacy and ground – which has the result that the ground or the essence is, as Hegel says elsewhere, "submerged" in the immediacy [WL 6:120/GW 11:320,36/475].²⁵) On the other hand, as purely contingent, it is not

at the end of the Doctrine of Essence, with the the emergence of subjectivity. But it is important that this shred or anticipation have the right sort of *relation* to what differs from it – as it does, in the account of existence.

²⁵ See Klaus J. Schmidt, *Georg W. F. Hegel, Wissenschaft der Logik – Die Lehre vom Wesen: Ein einführender Kommentar* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997), pp. 194–195 on this. I have found Schmidt helpful at a number of points in my interpretation of Hegel's account of modality.

something whose actuality is determined by itself (as “in and for itself”), and thus there is something else, some other ground, that explains its actuality. Thus it both has no ground and has a ground (WL 6:206/GW 11:384,19–36/545).

But this random conversion (*Umschlagen*) of contingency back and forth between groundlessness and groundedness is a unity – it’s the *same thing* that is being converted back and forth. In that way, contingency is not merely possible, it is necessary. The identical thing that is either grounded or groundless or both, *is*, in a way that is not merely contingent, and that Hegel therefore dubs “necessity” (WL 6:206–207/GW 11:384–385,15–38/545–546). Hegel describes the emergence of this identical thing that is shared by both sides of the conversion back and forth, as a “going together with itself” (*mit sich selbst zusammen gehen*; WL 6:206/GW 11:384,16–17/545; see the final paragraph of 4.8). The point is that whether the thing is grounded or groundless, it is inevitable – there is no way to talk about anything, without talking about this thing. So in that sense it is necessary.²⁶

This necessity is, initially, a “relative” necessity, corresponding to what Hegel calls a “real actuality” (*reale Wirklichkeit*), one that has all the manifoldness of “the thing with many properties, the existing world” (WL 6:208/GW 11:385,19/546). In contrast to the previous, “*formal actuality*,” real actuality has “content.” Associated with this real actuality is “real possibility” – a kind of possibility that goes beyond the mere absence of contradiction (the absence that constituted “*formal possibility*”), by taking all the “*determinations, circumstances, and conditions*” into account (WL 6:208/GW 11:386,3/547; emphasis added). We are likely to think of possibility, including this “real possibility,” as *contrasted to actuality* (including “real actuality”). However, Hegel argues that they amount to the same thing. Real actuality, he points out, appeared initially to be immediate but became “reflected” because it had to be *possible*. And possibility, on the other hand, had to take the “determinations,

26 In Dieter Henrich’s classic essay, “Hegels Theorie über den Zufall” (in his *Hegel im Kontext* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971]: 157–186), which helpfully emphasizes the importance of sheer contingency in Hegel’s Logic and his system as a whole (in contrast to interpretations that make it sound as though Hegel’s emphasis on necessity ultimately *eliminates* contingency), Henrich does not analyze the arguments by which Hegel shows the supersession of contingency by real possibility and real actuality, and of the latter by absolute necessity, and thus he leaves us in the dark about how Hegel understands the *relationship* between contingency and necessity. (His discussion at the top of p. 163 is very brief and, I think, misleading as it stands.)

circumstances, and conditions" into account in order to be the possibility of something *actual* (WL 6:210/GW 11:387,24–31/548). So when they are properly understood, actuality involves possibility and possibility involves actuality. Thus, here again, as in the case of contingency, there is something that unifies the domain that's in question – there is a "going together with itself" (WL 6:210/GW 11:387,35–36/548). This time, Hegel's name for the result of the process is "*real* necessity." "Real possibility and necessity are . . . only *apparently* different," he says, because "what is really possible can no longer be otherwise; under these conditions and circumstances, nothing else can result" (WL 6:211/GW 11:388,23–26/549).

Real necessity is not yet "absolute" necessity, because it is still relative: It takes something contingent – namely, the "determinations, circumstances, and conditions" that determine real possibility – as its point of departure (WL 6:211/GW 11:388,32–34/549). To argue for absolute necessity, Hegel points out that the real necessity that is constituted by actuality and possibility when they are converted back and forth in the way that I described in the previous paragraph, amounts, in fact, to an actuality, but one that by positing those moments (actuality and possibility) negatively, "posits *itself* in advance (or posits *itself*) as something *superseded*, or as *immediacy*" (WL 6:214/GW 11:390,34–8/551). The new actuality posits the previous actuality and possibility *negatively* insofar as it contrasts them with itself. Positing the previous actuality and possibility in that way amounts to positing *itself* "as something superseded or as immediacy" because it exists only as their unity. The previous actuality and possibility are each *superseded* in the other. (What I said in the previous paragraph implies both of these statements, which Hegel makes in the two sentences prior to the one from which the quotation was taken.) And the previous actuality and possibility constitute an *immediate* determinateness because their determinateness is simply given or contingent (via the "determinations, circumstances, and conditions"), and because the new actuality supersedes them.

But since the new actuality emerges, in the way that I just described, *from* the actuality that was real possibility, it comes into existence "from the *negation of itself*" (WL 6:214/GW 11:390,9–13/551). Since it is mediated by its negation, it is determined as possibility (that which can *be* or *not be*). In this mediation, both its possibility (or its "being-in-itself") and its immediacy are "positedness," in the same way (WL 6:214/GW 11:390,13–17/551). They are both posited because the new actuality takes

both of them as realizing itself; that is, it posits them. But if we take immediacy as a kind of actuality, the unity of possibility and immediacy/actuality (their both being posited in the same way) is *contingency*. So *real necessity itself determines itself* (via this new actuality) *as contingency*. And by *removing real necessity's dependence on a contingency that is external to it* – the dependence that made real necessity “real” – this new development turns real necessity into “*absolute necessity*” (WL 6:214/GW 11:390,21–28/551). What real necessity had “posited *in advance*” is now “its own positing” (WL 6:214/GW 11:390,33–34/551) – that is, a positing carried out by what will now be called absolute necessity. The conversion back and forth of actuality and real possibility in real necessity, when it is understood as involving what amounts to its own partial, internal contingency, and thus as eliminating the need for an outside contingency, has allowed necessity to escape from its dependence on an outside contingency, and thus to become absolute necessity.²⁷

Hegel now describes absolute necessity as “just as much simple immediacy or *pure being* as simple reflection-into-itself or *pure essence*” (WL 6:215/GW 11:391,8–10/552), and insofar as it is pure being, its “differences” take the form of “self-standing others, over against each other,” at the same time that, insofar as it is essence, they are “absolute identity” (ibid.). Insofar as (1) necessity is pure being, these “differences,” which (please note this well) are “determined as actuality and possibility,” do not “shine into” each other, and neither of them wants to show any trace of a relation to the other (WL 6:216/GW 11:391,34–36/552). As mere “others,” in relation to each other, actuality and possibility blindly “go under in otherness” (they are *blinder Untergang im Anderssein* [WL 6:217/GW 11:392,33/553]); that is, they meet the fate of qualities, which are nothing in themselves, but defined solely by their relation to others. But when, on the other hand, (2) necessity is seen as *essence*, this transition or going under of the one into the other becomes a “going together with itself” or “absolute identity”: The “others” (actuality and possibility) are seen as aspects of a single process of reflection, or internal positing, carried out by essence in the form of absolute necessity (WL 6:217/

27 This analysis of Hegel's argument is meant to fill the gap that inclined W. T. Stace to substitute his own analysis of the “fundamentals of idealism” for Hegel's actual argument (*The Philosophy of Hegel. A Systematic Exposition* [New York: Dover, 1955], p. 215), whose validity he doubted (p. 213).

GW 11:392,38–1/553). By thus elegantly applying his standing contrast between being and essence to the modalities and their mutual relations, Hegel confirms that absolute necessity supersedes the whole range of modalities.²⁸

Absolute necessity is clearly a major landmark in the development of Essence, and in the Logic as a whole. It corresponds, within Essence, to true infinity, in Being, in that both of them involve the transcendence of ordinary (finite, contingent) reality by something that Hegel has argued is, in fact, more real. In the present case, where Hegel is using the word “real” in connection with contingency, his actual term for the result of the development would probably be “more concrete,” rather than literally “more real,” but the upshot of the argument is the same: that one cannot be fully aware of the problems in the use of the ordinary concepts without seeing a need to go beyond them in the ways that Hegel describes. Like true infinity, absolute necessity is more self-sufficient than the ordinary concepts that it goes beyond: True infinity no longer depended on its relation to “others” to determine its quality, and absolute necessity, which generates its own, internal contingency, no longer depends on its relation to contingently given “determinations, circumstances, and conditions” to give it determinateness. The difference between the two concepts, of course, is that absolute necessity embodies the overcoming of the “collapse” of true infinity, and the conceptual developments that followed that collapse, so that absolute necessity should be immune to problems that true infinity, by itself, could not deal with.

28 Klaus Schmidt interprets the “differences” that Hegel discusses in this passage as exhibiting an “exaggerated individuation,” which absolute necessity overcomes by a use of “force” (*Gewalt*) (*Georg W. F. Hegel, Wissenschaft der Logik – Die Lehre vom Wesen: Ein einführender Kommentar* [Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997], p. 208). Hegel does indeed dramatize these differences by referring to them as “free actualities” and calling necessity “blind,” in relation to them (WL 6:216/GW 11:391,31–34/552); but he does not use the word “force,” or anything equivalent to it, in this passage, and he does say that the differences “are determined as actuality and possibility” (*ibid.*), and it seems clear from this and from the general context that the only thing that is being “individuated” here is possibility and actuality, and Hegel’s point is simply that they *appear* to be independent of one another, but are in fact “posited in advance” by and thus subsumed within absolute necessity (WL 6:217/GW 11:392,2/553). Hegel describes necessity as “blind,” here, only insofar as it is viewed through categories of being, rather than categories of essence. In a reading that resembles Schmidt’s, André Doz takes the passage to refer to “beings” in general (“*chaque étant*”) and to picture absolute necessity as “*violent*” and exhibiting an unresolved “excess of immediateness” (*La Logique de Hegel et les Problèmes traditionnels de l’Ontologie* [Paris: Vrin, 1987], p. 157).

4.15. The Actual and the Rational

By showing that in specifying itself as actuality and ultimately as “absolute necessity,” essence or possibility must posit itself as *contingency*, Hegel’s argument to absolute necessity is a contribution to *theodicy* – justifying God’s ways with finite creatures such as ourselves. It argues, in effect, that in order to be actual, freedom (selfhood, negativity, essence) must take the form of a realm of contingency (accident). So we should not think that God’s “failure” to prevent evil and natural catastrophes demonstrates God’s lack of interest in us. As St. Augustine argued in *De libero arbitrio*, God permits evil because God wants us to be free, and freedom is the greatest gift (the gift, as Kant and Hegel say, of the opportunity to be oneself). To this, Hegel adds that God permits natural catastrophes because without contingency, as such, there would be no freedom as actuality. In this way, the presence of sheer contingency is, in fact, an essential feature of absolute necessity.

The topics of actuality and justifying God naturally bring to mind Hegel’s famous (or infamous) dictum, in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, that “what is rational is actual, and what is actual is rational” (7:24/20). In the light of his discussion of true infinity, where the truly real turns out to be infinite and free, and in the light of his argument from contingency to absolute necessity, it is clear that Hegel will not interpret actuality as mere factual existence. Actuality is the “*unity of essence and existence*” (WL 6:186/GW 11:369,3–4/529). The argument that we have just been looking at leads to the conclusion that this unity, when it is properly understood as absolute necessity, must include sheer contingency, as one of its aspects. And this contingency presumably does not qualify as “rational,” in itself; it is rational only insofar as absolute necessity itself, which requires such contingency to be one of its aspects, is rational. Looking at that absolute necessity, then, we ask in what sense is *it* “rational”? Hegel said in a lecture that as the unity of the inner and the outer, actuality is not opposed to rationality but rather is thoroughly rational (EL §142A, middle). In such a unity, I take it, the essence or ground of existence (the “inner”) is fully present; that is, the actual is fully reflected or fully explicable. However, someone who has doubts about whether everything that is actual is rational might have doubts about identifying what is rational – in a *strong* sense of that word – with whatever’s essence or ground is fully present. And Hegel himself in fact normally means more by “rational” (*vernünftig*) than just having its essence or ground fully present, as I will now show.

"The proper philosophical significance of 'reason,'" Hegel says in introducing the "Idea," in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, is "the subject-object . . . the unity of the ideal and the real, of the finite and the infinite," etc. (EL §214; cf. WL 6:462–463/GW 12:173,11–35/755, and PhG 3:177/138). Hegel identifies this unity with the Idea, the realized Concept. It follows from this definition of "reason" that *actuality*, which is not yet the subject or the Concept, still less the subject-object or the Idea, *is not yet reason*. (Nor is absolute necessity yet reason.) It is true that in the Introduction to the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel describes actuality as "the reason that is" (*die seiende Vernunft* [EL §6]), but his analysis of actuality in the actual text of both Logics does not identify it with reason or rationality, as such. He arrives at those concepts only later.²⁹ So I think that in identifying the actual with the rational, in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* and in his lectures, Hegel must have been using "actuality" in a short-hand way, as containing, by implication, the later developments of the Concept and the Idea.³⁰ The fact that Hegel didn't *explain* his short-hand, in this way, gives even more excuse to the critics of his doctrine on this point, who could in fact have turned to the Logic

29 In his generally very helpful discussion of Hegel's doctrine that the rational is actual and the actual is rational, Michael Hardimon writes that "the essence of things . . . consists, roughly speaking, in their inner or underlying rational structure," and that Hegel uses the word "rational" to mean "both rationally intelligible and reasonable or good," so that actuality, as the unity of essence and existence, will involve goodness, as an aspect of essence (Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy. The Project of Reconciliation* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994], p. 53). I agree that Hegel understands "essence" as involving a kind of rational intelligibility, but I don't believe that Hegel introduces a sort of rationality that explicitly involves *goodness* until he reaches the Doctrine of the Concept. His account of "essence" doesn't involve anything obviously evaluative, and "the good" is a feature only of the Idea. No doubt if we interpret "essence" in the influential way in which Aristotle interprets it, it has fairly immediate evaluative implications. (Allen Wood interprets Hegel's conception of the relation between the actual and the rational as "a rather Aristotelian variety of ethical naturalism" [*Hegel's Ethical Thought*, p. 12].) But Hegel divides his Aristotelian ideas between the Doctrine of Essence and the Doctrine of the Concept, and the evaluative aspect enters, explicitly, only in the Doctrine of the Concept. (I am referring only to Hegel's actual analytical text; his lecture comments and his EL Introduction are, as I have mentioned, looser.) I agree, of course, that Hegel thinks that the evaluative aspect is *implicit* in actuality and thus in the Doctrine of Essence, but he shouldn't blame his critics (as he does in EL §6R) for overlooking something that is only implicit in the immediately relevant portion of his text.

30 In his introductory remarks on the Idea, Hegel says that "what anything *actual* is supposed in truth *to be*, if its Concept is not in it and if its objectivity does not correspond to its Concept at all, it is impossible to say, for it would be nothing" (WL 6: 464/756; emphasis altered). But the references to "truth" and the "Concept," here, precisely presuppose a lot of discussion that is subsequent to the introduction of actuality, as such.

(from the PR Preface) and not found this point clarified in the portion of the text – namely, the analysis of actuality – to which Hegel’s formula would seem to direct them.

This error on Hegel’s part is hardly a fatal one; it simply reflects a carelessness in his use, in “popularizing” contexts, of his own categories. The fact that he was able to commit such an error probably reflects the relative isolation in which he was unfortunately working, in his eminent professorship in Berlin. The fact that the error seems not to have been clarified in the subsequent literature is no doubt due to the absence of a clear understanding of his Logic, among interpreters of the *Philosophy of Right*. In the paragraph following his dictum, in the Preface to the PR, Hegel does in fact state that for philosophy, “nothing is actual except the *Idea*,” and that “the rational . . . is synonymous with the *Idea*” (7:25/20; emphasis added), which suggests that our attention should really be directed to the *Idea*, as the reality behind the “actual,” rather than to the actual as such. Few commentaries on the “actual/rational” dictum have explored what lies behind this suggestion.³¹ We will explore this in the remainder of this chapter, and especially in the next chapter.

4.16. Substance and Causality

For the absolute necessity that he has been analyzing, Hegel now introduces the term, “absolute *relation*,” of which the first, “immediate” instantiation is substance and its accidents. This new category is a “relation” because it relates actuality to possibility: It is an interpretation of the “difference” within absolute necessity that we were discussing in the penultimate paragraph of 4.14. Indeed, substance is a “relation *to itself*,” because absolute necessity, understood from the point of view of essence, is “being, solely *as reflection*” (WL 6:217–218/GW

31 Michael Hardimon gives a brief sketch of the “*Idea*,” in connection with Hegel’s “actual/rational” dictum (*Hegel’s Social Philosophy. The Project of Reconciliation* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994], pp. 57–58), but he doesn’t explore the argument connecting, or the differences between, Actuality and the *Idea*. Some of the most influential critics of Hegel’s dictum about the actual and the rational are Rudolf Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit* (Berlin: Gaertner, 1857), John Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics* (New York: Holt, 1915), and Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 1945), vol. 2, “The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx and the Aftermath.” See also Ernst Tugendhat, *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, translated by Paul Stern (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), pp. 311–321. The dictum is defended by Allen W. Wood, *Hegel’s Ethical Thought*, pp. 10–14, and Michael Hardimon, *Hegel’s Social Philosophy. The Project of Reconciliation*, pp. 52–83.

11:392–393,7–16/553–554; emphasis altered). The “sides” of the absolute relation – that is, actuality and possibility – are each “totalities” in the sense that they each constitute the whole of the relation, including their opposite (WL 6:218/GW 11:393,1–4/554; cf. WL 6:188/GW 11:371,21–23/531). To see how this can be the case, we could look back to Hegel’s argument from contingency to absolute necessity (in which possibility and actuality, and real possibility and real actuality, were converted into each other, and were all ultimately superseded by absolute necessity); but Hegel proposes now to give alternative, more concrete formulations of the same relationship.

As I said, the first formulation is in terms of substance and accidents. Substance corresponds, in effect, to possibility or essence, and its accidents correspond to actuality, shine, or positedness. In the latter respect, as the flux (*Wechsel*) of accidents, it is creative and destructive power (*Macht*). This power belongs, of course, only to substance itself, and not to any accident as such. Hegel points out, however, that the substance/accident “relation” puts all of its emphasis on the *identity* of substance with its accidents, and none on their difference. To be real power for-itself, by bringing about something really different from itself, substance needs to move to the second formulation of the absolute relation: causation.

In causation, substantiality is divided into something that is only posited: the *effect* [*Wirkung*], and substance that is for-itself: the *cause* [*Ursache*]. The effect corresponds to the accidents, and the cause to the substance, but the cause’s power is now manifest because cause and effect have separate, differentiated identities. At least, that’s what they are meant to have; initially, their identities don’t succeed in being separate, inasmuch as substance has actuality, as cause, only in (bringing about) its effect (WL 6:224/GW 11:397,21–22/559), and the effect contains nothing that wasn’t contained in the cause. Seen in this way, the “power” of the substance or cause, as such, is not manifest (WL 6:225/GW 11:398,28/559). Nor does this cause/effect relationship exhibit *necessity*, since its content is contingent, arbitrarily given (WL 6:225/GW 11:398,32; 399,7/560) from some external source. It is a finite causality, whose content and form are separate from and indifferent toward each other (WL 6:229/GW 11:401,7/563). Its content is, in effect, a thing or a finite substance, a “substratum,” which possesses an existence that is independent of its causality (WL 6:229/GW 11:401,25/563). This independent existence yields an infinite regress of causes: what causes the finite nature of the substratum, which causes the initial

effect? What causes what causes the finite nature of the substratum? and so forth (WL 6:231/GW 11:402,3/564). Plus a corresponding infinite “progress” of effects: What is the effect of what is the effect of the initial cause? and so forth.

This regress and this progress are a “bad infinite” (WL 6:232/GW 11:403,12/565), since (to put it in the language of Being) nothing here is what it is by virtue of itself, alone; or (to put it in the language of Essence) we are stuck with an “immediacy” that has not revealed itself as a product of negativity or reflection. However, both the arbitrary givenness or contingency and the bad-infinite regress and progress bring out an important fact: that causality “posits in advance,” as independent of itself, something that is not part and parcel of causality itself. It posits in advance, Hegel says, a “*passive* substance” that is not “for itself” (like the original substance or cause), but is nevertheless substance insofar as it has independent existence (it has “abstract identity with itself” [WL 6:234/GW 11:405,24–25/566]). This passive substance is confronted by an “active substance,” which is the cause. By positing in advance something independent of itself, on which to work, causality has reestablished (WL 6:234/GW 11:405,29/566) a cause that can be for-itself because it has an identity and power that are not identical with its effect.

The relationship between the active and the passive substance now turns out to have an important ambiguity. On the one hand, since it was the active substance that “posited in advance” the passive one, the latter is superseded by the former. In acting on the passive substance, the active substance is, in effect, acting on itself, posited as an other (WL 6:234/GW 11:405,3/567). On the other hand, the active substance also “supersedes its identity with” the passive substance (WL 6:234/GW 11:405,18/567).³² It supersedes its identity with the passive substance because the passive substance must be independent of it in order for its action on the passive substance to manifest its power, as causation was intended, from its introduction, to do. Thus, the active substance *preserves* the passive one, at the same time that it supersedes it. Hegel says this occurs insofar as only *certain features* of the passive substance are superseded (WL 6:235/GW 11:405,22–23/567); and he points out

32 A. V. Miller mistranslates the second half of this sentence. A more accurate translation would say that the action of the active cause “is two actions in one: the sublating of its determinedness – namely, of its condition (that is, the sublating of the self-subsistence of the passive substance) – and that it sublates its identity with the passive substance, and thus *presupposes* itself or posits itself as *other*.”

that transactions of this kind involve what amounts to *violence* (*Gewalt*: WL 6:235/GW 11:405,25/567), which, he adds, is justified violence (*nur ihr Recht*: WL 6:235/GW 11:406,12/568), insofar as the violent cause is only acting on an other that it, itself, has posited in advance (WL 6:235/GW 11:405,32/567). What the passive substance loses is an immediacy or substantiality that were foreign to it in any case, because it is a positedness (WL 6:235/GW 11:406,12–15/568).

However, a reversal now occurs:

But now in being posited in its positedness, or in *its own* determination, [the passive substance] is not thereby superseded; rather, it *only goes together with itself* in that way, and thus *in being determined* it is *originate*. . . . Its *being posited* by an other, and its own *becoming* are one and the same thing.

(WL 6:235–236/GW 11:406,15–26/568)

The passive substance's "own determination" is positedness: It was introduced as something that is not for-itself, but passive. So when it is posited *in* this determination, it is simply confirmed as what it already is. But something whose being posited is as innocuous as this, does not depend upon what is other than it; it is just as "original" as the active cause; it "goes together with itself" and is itself, in fact, a "cause" (WL 6:236/GW 11:406,24/568; compare, to the same effect, WL 6:247/GW 12:13,28–32/579).

By becoming a cause in its own right, the passive substance supersedes the effect that the active cause previously had, in it, and thus supersedes the active cause's causal substantiality (WL 6:236/GW 11:406,6/568), rendering it, in effect, passive. However, inasmuch as the formerly passive substance is now a cause (and, to that extent, active), and the formerly active substance is now passive, the formerly active substance *regains* its causal activity *through* its passivity, and thus active is passive and passive is active: The action of the "finite causality" of substances that are active to the exclusion of being passive, or passive to the exclusion of being active (with the proneness that this finite causality has to spuriously-infinite regress and progress), is "bent around" into something that "returns into itself": an "infinite *reciprocal action*" (WL 6:237/GW 11:407,26–33/569).

4.17. From Reciprocal Action to Freedom

It is useful to remember at this point that the whole purpose of Hegel's discussion of the "absolute relation," in the forms (so far) of the

substance/accident relationship and the cause/effect relationship, was to clarify the relationship between possibility and actuality, within absolute necessity. Thus, we needn't take him to be arguing (for example) that there is no purpose for which substance and accident or cause and effect can usefully be distinguished from one another. Rather, he is arguing that *as interpretations of the relationship between possibility and actuality within absolute necessity*, substance/accident and cause/effect fail to do the job. And the "reciprocal action" that he is now about to analyze is not a reciprocal action between just anything; it is a reciprocal action between, in particular, possibility and actuality (or substance and accident, or cause and effect, understood as representing possibility and actuality), within absolute necessity – where the latter's significance (in turn) is that it is the developed form of the negativity and reflection that were Essence's point of departure; and the significance of that negativity and reflection is that it represents what was left of Being after the "collapse" of true infinity and after the problems encountered by Quantity and Measure.³³ Bearing this context in mind can help us to avoid a great deal of possible confusion.

- 33 Adolf Trendelenburg overlooked this point when he wrote that "freedom has . . . in this relationship no other content than this consolation of substance, that what is produced is after all substances and that the effects, as counteracting, are themselves causes. This relation . . . can be applied anywhere that something moves. Who ever called such a thing freedom?" (*Logische Untersuchungen* [3rd edition, Leipzig, 1870], vol. 1, p. 63). The relation that I have interpreted Hegel as analyzing cannot be found "anywhere that something moves," precisely because it is a relation between negativity and determinateness (or between possibility and actuality, as representatives of negativity and determinateness). (For a comprehensive study of and response to Trendelenburg's influential critique of Hegel, see Josef Schmidt, *Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik und ihre Kritik durch Adolf Trendelenburg* [Munich: Johannes Berchmans Verlag, 1977].) Charles Taylor's resourceful and imaginative attempt (in his *Hegel*, Chapter 11) to restate Hegel's argument in Essence resembles Trendelenburg's in its failure to note the two key facts that I mentioned in the text: that substance/accident and cause/effect, in Hegel's analysis, are supposed to provide accounts of, in particular, the relation between possibility and actuality in absolute necessity; and that absolute necessity and Essence as a whole develop out of and are meant to concretize Hegel's initial conception (in the Doctrine of Being) of "negativity." Both of these key facts are relevant to Taylor's problem of determining how Hegel thinks he can show "through the causal relation itself, that is the relation of the accidents among themselves, their inherence in the self-generating totality" (*Hegel*, pp. 288–289); and they both give reasons for thinking that the fact that (as Taylor correctly says) "the transition from interaction to causation-out-of-totality . . . is grounded on the whole earlier argument of the *Logic*, on the very conception of Essence as totality whose parts follow one on another of necessity," does *not* show that Hegel "gives us what are only hints and traces of the higher reality which the lower is meant to be an emanation from, and takes these for a proof" (p. 294; punctuation altered for clarity). If the substance/accident relation and the causal relation have entered the argument precisely

For the crucial final passage of Essence, in which we finally arrive explicitly at "freedom," I offer, first, a three-paragraph interpretative precis, and then commentary.

"Reciprocal action" initially presents itself as a mutual causation between two substances, each of which is active and, at the same time, passive. But since the two substances are no longer significantly different, there is no longer any need to think of them as distinct from each other, so there is no need to think of their action as "reciprocal," either. "Reciprocal action" is just an "empty manner" of representing what goes on (WL 6:238/GW 11:407,18–23/569). In reciprocal action, as in causality, the cause stands in relation to itself, *as cause*, in the effect (WL 6:238/GW 11:408,6–8/570). Reciprocal action has become, in effect, an identity.

In this way, Hegel says, causality has returned to its "absolute concept," and at the same time arrived at the Concept itself (WL 6:238/GW 11:408,9–10/570). Hegel relates causation back to the difference within real necessity in which "free actualities" (which, as I explained in the text and note 28, earlier, were possibility and actuality, respectively) confronted each other. Necessity was the "inner identity" between them; and causality, Hegel says, is the "manifestation" of this inner identity, in which "its shine of substantial otherness has superseded itself and necessity is raised to *freedom*" (WL 6:238–239/GW 11:408,12–18/570) – a dramatic claim that he will now begin to explain.

Necessity and causality have "disappeared," in reciprocal action, because by containing both this inner identity between possibility and actuality (on the one hand), and their absolute substantiality and thus their absolute contingency in relation to each other (on the other hand), necessity and causality are "the absolute contradiction" (WL 6:239/GW 11:408,26–31/570).

Necessity is being that is *because* it is [cf. WL 6:215/GW 11:391,13–17/552]: it is the unity of being with itself, where being has itself as

as possible ways of understanding how possibility and actuality relate to each other, then Hegel's argument doesn't proceed from "the causal relation itself," but from *the causal relation as an account of the relation between possibility and actuality*; which makes it easier to see how the argument could make headway. And if, as I argued in 4.6–4.8, what Taylor refers to as the "self-generating totality" or "the very conception of Essence as totality whose parts follow one on another of necessity" is an elaboration, specifically, of *negativity*, then Hegel is relying neither on an unexamined premise that was smuggled into the argument earlier, nor on mere "hints and traces," but on an appropriate development of a well-motivated conception that has survived the self-criticism undergone by Quality, Quantity and Measure.

its ground; but the reverse is also true, that because it has a ground, it is not being, but simply shine, relationship, or mediation. Causality is this posited going-over of originaive being, the *cause*, into shine or mere *positedness*, and conversely of positedness into originaiveness.

(WL 6:239/GW 11:408–409,32–38/570–571)

That is, causality is the “going-over” from the active to the passive substance, and vice versa, that we analyzed in the latter part of 4.16; and Hegel is telling us that this going-over is another instance of the mutual “going-over” of necessity into contingency (“shine, relationship, or mediation”) and of contingency into necessity, which we analyzed in 4.14. This convertibility of originaive being into positedness, and vice versa, brings us to an “identity of being and shine” (of *Sein und Schein*). But this identity is still something “inner”; “freedom” requires one more step. The “movement” of causation – its development as an idea, which we followed – brings this “inner necessity,” the inner identity of possibility and actuality, cause and effect, being and shine, *into the open*. When that happens, “*Necessity becomes freedom*, not by disappearing, but *insofar as its (as yet) inner identity* [of possibility and actuality] *is manifested*” – the manifestation that is carried out by the “movement” of causation (WL 6:239–240/GW 11:409,39–15/570–571; emphasis added).

How does the inner identity of possibility and actuality being manifested constitute *freedom*? Here again, the first, vital thing to remember is that the possibility and actuality (and necessity and substance and causation) that are under discussion here are the latest incarnations of the negativity or reflection with which the Doctrine of Essence began, and that this negativity was described by Hegel at its first introduction, in “Quality,” as the “beginning of the *subject*” and as “being-within-self” (WL 5:123/GW 21:103,27–28/115; emphasis added). If anything is free, presumably it is a *subject* that is free. What, though, is the connection between negativity’s latest incarnation, “reciprocal action,” and freedom? Necessity and causality are often thought to be essentially the opposite of freedom; why should reciprocal action be different from them, in this respect? Have we somehow leaped from one polar opposite to the other? The answer to this last question is “no.” Freedom is not the opposite of reciprocal action; nor is reciprocal action the opposite of the cause/effect relationship; and cause/effect, substance/accident, and necessity are not opposites of anything that follows them, either, including freedom itself. No leap from one opposite to the other has taken place here, nor even a transition through intervening stages which amounts to such a leap. No leap is necessary

precisely because *all* of the concepts in question are elaborations of negativity, and thus of the “beginning of the *subject*,” so that the transition to freedom is not the introduction of something that is completely different from what goes before it, but rather the emergence of something that was implicit in all of the stages or incarnations of negativity (both in Essence and, even earlier, in Being).

However, a transition, and an important one, certainly does take place here. We arrive at “the Concept, the realm of subjectivity or of freedom” (WL 6:240/GW 11:409,6–7/571), to which the third and final part of the Logic will be devoted. How does freedom (subjectivity, the Concept) differ from the prior incarnations of negativity? It differs, Hegel says, by being the *manifestation* of the inner identity that previous incarnations of negativity such as absolute necessity embodied. Why is “manifestation” so important, here? Manifestation overcomes the dichotomy of “inner” and “outer,” on which this identity was previously hung up, insofar as it was merely an “inner” identity. “Actuality” itself was introduced as the unity of inner and outer, essence and existence. Initially, the “absolute” embodied this unity *in an external way*, because it was external to the reflection that contemplated it. Actuality *properly so called*, in the forms of possibility, actuality, and necessity, was the absolute’s own reflection of itself, which then was unified with the absolute in the absolute “relation” (substance, causation, etc.) (WL 6:186–187/GW 11:369,3–3/529). Thus, the absolute relation, especially in its ultimate forms as causation and reciprocal action, *manifests* the unity of inner and outer that actuality, as such, was supposed to be about. The actual is “manifestation” inasmuch as “it is, in its exteriority, *itself*, and it is *only* in its exteriority – that is, as a movement that differentiates itself from itself and determines itself – that it is itself” (WL 6:201/GW 11:381,27–30/542; emphasis altered). It is only in causality and reciprocal action that this manifestation is complete, and when we see what has thus been completed, we see – Hegel asserts – that it is freedom.

This accomplishment of “manifestation” – that the actual “is, in its exteriority, *itself*,” or that the “inner identity [of possibility and actuality] is *manifested*” – should remind us of the problem that led to the “collapse” of being-for-self or true infinity: that we were unable, with the resources available at that point, to conceptualize the unity of true infinity and determinate being (see 3.24). Possibility and actuality, as aspects of absolute necessity, and thus as developed forms of negativity, parallel true infinity as an alternative development of negativity, and if their inner identity is in fact “manifested,” it seems that something very

like the unity of true infinity and determinate being has in fact been achieved. We will examine this relationship further in the next chapter.

Regarding the issue of freedom, however: Beyond the fact that it has to do with a *subject* (in the form of negativity), we still face the question, why is it appropriate to describe what has been completely “manifested,” here – this unity of inner and outer, possibility and actuality – as *freedom*? The answer is that what has been completely manifested or unified here amounts to *self-determination*. It is something that determines itself in its exteriority, and in so doing, remains itself. If freedom is anything, presumably it is self-determination. Absolute necessity was self-determination insofar as it unified possibility (the “inner”) with actuality (the “outer”), by generating its own contingency (possibility/actuality) within itself. It was self-determination because it could not be accused of depending on something external – on “determinations, circumstances, and conditions” – to determine specifically what it would be. However, the process of self-manifestation, itself, which Hegel had identified as the “content” of the absolute (WL 6:194/GW 11:375, 11/536), could still be identified as external to absolute necessity; in which case, absolute necessity would in that respect not yet be fully self-determining. Substance and causation (the “absolute relation”) then unified the self-determination that absolute necessity was, *with* the process of self-manifestation itself (and thus with the “absolute”), thus making self-determination self-determined in every possible way. The result, Hegel says, must clearly be freedom.

So the point of Hegel’s whole analysis of the modalities (from contingency through absolute necessity) and substance and causation as “manifestation” and thus as (in every way) self-determination is to show that something that is, at least, a close relative of freedom, is not only *not incompatible with* necessity (as an interpretation of the relation between essence and determinateness, or God and the world), but is a *necessary articulation of* necessity (as such an interpretation). This is Hegel’s answer to the long-running dispute in metaphysics and theology as to whether God is free in the sense of arbitrary, able to act on any “whim” whatever, or free only in the sense of doing the best (what expresses his essence as rational and caring, and what thus expresses *himself*). Late medieval theologians such as William of Ockham favored the former interpretation of God’s freedom, whereas earlier theologians like St. Thomas Aquinas, and rationalists like Leibniz and Spinoza, favored the latter interpretation. Hegel’s answer is that God’s freedom is his self-determination, and that this self-determination is absolute necessity,

and thus in no way arbitrary (so that at this level, Ockham is wrong) – but that this absolute necessity includes a domain of contingency or arbitrariness, as a necessary moment within it (and at this level, the rationalists are wrong).

4.18. What Sort of “Freedom” Is This?

Interpreting the necessity-freedom transition in this way inevitably raises the question of what (if anything) this analysis of *divine* freedom has to do with the freedom of individual *humans*. I have indicated the general lines of my response to this question in Chapter 3 (especially 3.17), where I explained that Hegel is presenting “God” (initially, in the form of true infinity) as the achievement, *by finite beings* and in particular (no doubt) by *humans*, of selfhood or self-determination, and thus of full “reality”; so that when this reality (God, essence, possibility) determines itself, in the Doctrine of Essence, as existence, actuality, and so on, this event can at the same time be read in reverse, in the manner of the chapter on “Quality,” as existing and actual humans achieving selfhood and self-determination – and thus, their own freedom, as well as their reality – as this God. The sequence of the *argument* (in one case, from the finite to the infinite, and in the other case, from essence or possibility to existence or actuality) should not be interpreted as a causal sequence, or a sequence of intention and action, or a derivation of something less real from something more real. The fact that the finite is discussed before the infinite does not mean that it is more real than the infinite (quite the reverse is the case, in fact); and likewise the fact that essence and possibility (“God”) are discussed before existence and actuality (the world and humans) does not mean that the former are more real or more fundamental than the latter. On the contrary, the *relationship* is what is fundamental; so once again, as I explained in 3.17, Hegel is never a theologian as opposed to a humanist, or a humanist as opposed to a theologian; he is always both at once. What makes Hegel’s discussion of freedom in Essence seem distant from any discussion of human beings is that our *habitual* way of thinking about God and humans is essentially the “*spurious infinity*” way, in which God and humans are polar opposites. When we think of them in terms of true infinity, instead, in which the infinite is the self-superseding of the finite and the finite achieves reality through that self-superseding, then God’s freedom (“manifestation”) can at the same time be humans’ freedom (self-superseding) and realization. All of this will become clearer

in the Doctrine of the Concept (see especially 5.2), and especially in the *Philosophy of Spirit* (see Chapter 6).

Even apart from the issue of the relation between theology and humans, what Hegel means to say about the relation between necessity and freedom has seldom been understood. Friedrich Engels propounded an influential misinterpretation when he wrote that according to Hegel, freedom is “the appreciation of necessity.”³⁴ Hegel does use the quoted phrase in a couple of places, but not as a definition or explanation of freedom.³⁵ It should be clear from the account that I’ve given of Hegel’s definitive treatment, in the Logic, of necessity and freedom, how far off the mark Engels’s interpretation is, since the relation between freedom and necessity, here, has nothing to do with any “appreciation of” necessity. Unfortunately, such influential twentieth-century commentaries as Stace’s *The Philosophy of Hegel* and Taylor’s *Hegel* have not fully clarified what Hegel is driving at in his discussion (see notes 27 and 33), if it’s not what Engels suggests. So it’s not surprising that Hegel’s account of freedom tends not to be taken very seriously by (at least) Anglophone writers who survey and compare leading treatments of the subject.

I hope that what I have been laying out makes it clearer what Hegel is driving at. As I explained in 3.11, Hegel is neither a Kantian incompatibilist (his efforts in “Quality” are clearly intended to overcome the major problem of intelligibility that is widely perceived in Kant’s incompatibilism), nor a Hobbes- or Hume-style compatibilist. (Still less is Hegel a “dialectical materialist,” since like other scientisms, dialectical materialism has, as far as I can see, no developed position at all on the

34 Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), p. 157; *Marx-Engels Gesamt-Ausgabe*, vol. 20, p. 106. Without naming Hegel or Engels, A. J. Ayer says that “some philosophers have defined freedom as the consciousness of necessity” (in his essay, “Freedom and Necessity,” reprinted in Gary Watson, ed., *Freedom of the Will* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982], p. 18; originally in his *Philosophical Essays* [London: Macmillan, 1954]), and raises reasonable objections to such a view: “I do not become free by becoming conscious that I am not,” and if the idea is that I can “master” necessity by becoming conscious of it, then that “necessity” seems not to be necessary, after all (p. 19).

35 At EG §467, Hegel writes: “With insight into necessity [*Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit*], the last immediacy, which still attaches to formal thought, has vanished.” His point is that with such insight, thought is no longer subject to the dictates of an “immediate” given, but rather “seeks and finds in the object only itself” (EG §467A, TWA 10:287/227). Hegel’s idea of thought finding *itself* in reality has little in common with Engels’s notion that history and nature are subject to “laws” that the scientifically informed person will “free” himself by obeying. See Bernhard Lakebrink, *Die Europäische Idee der Freiheit* (Leyden: Brill, 1968), p. 322 n.1.

nature of freedom.) The "necessity" that Hegel discusses in "Essence" is not the necessity of natural laws, which empiricists such as Hobbes and Hume seek to demonstrate is compatible with our being free in the sense that we are responsible for our actions; rather, it is a relationship between possibility and actuality, the inner and the outer, or negativity and determinateness, whose ultimate purpose, therefore, is to explain how selfhood (embodied in negativity, the inner, or possibility) can determine itself in specific ways. Thus, "necessity" as such *already embodies* selfhood, freedom, and responsibility, implicitly – which is certainly not the case with the necessity of natural laws, in empiricist compatibilism.

Hegel's fundamental argument for the compatibility of freedom and natural determinism is his argument, in "Quality," for the unreality of the finite, as such, which makes infinite freedom what is real, and the finite (and its determinism, if any) a moment within – deriving whatever reality it has from – that infinite freedom, and consequently perfectly compatible with it. Hegel's analysis of necessity and freedom in "Essence" (like his analysis of Nature and of the freedom of Spirit, in the second and third volumes of the *Encyclopedia*) reformulates and defends this argument in "Quality," by showing how negativity (the gist of true infinity, which survives the latter's "collapse") can determine itself, and thus how there can be an intelligible relationship between negativity (as infinite or "reality"-conferring) and determinateness, so that the infinite and the finite, or negativity and its determinacy, can indeed relate to one another in something like the way in which they were supposed to relate to each other in true infinity. (The specifics of this relationship are made more explicit in the Doctrine of the Concept, which follows; see 5.2) Taken "by itself," without this context, Hegel's account of necessity and freedom has no intelligible relevance to the traditional problem of the relation of freedom to reality.

Granting (perhaps) that Hegel has identified an impressive kind of *self-determination*, in "Essence," we still might wonder what this self-determination has to do with human freedom, if we suppose (following Kant) that human freedom has an important connection with the capacity for *thinking*. So far, Hegel hasn't mentioned thought, or (for that matter) anything at all that sounds distinctively human, in his systematic development of "freedom," though his mentioning of "subjectivity" and of the "Concept," in connection with this "freedom," certainly suggests – accurately – that he thinks that this freedom has an important connection with thought. But what kind of connection is it, and by what right does he think this?

The first part of the answer to this question is implicit in what I have said about the fundamental role of negativity in the Doctrine of Essence. Negativity, of course, is the negation of negation, or “negative unity with oneself” (WL 5:124/GW 21:103,31/115). When Hegel (in “Quality”) introduces the moral “ought” as an example of how negativity can be implemented, it is clear (if it wasn’t already) that negativity is a sophisticated relationship that is likely to involve thought in many cases – even if it isn’t immediately obvious that it must *always* involve thought. The second part of the answer to the question is that while “freedom,” “subjectivity,” and the “Concept” may be *epitomized* in some of the highest capacities of humans, including thought, they needn’t always involve what we would immediately recognize as thought. The concept of “thought,” as such, never appears, as a topic, in the Logic, but only in the second part (§465) of the *Philosophy of Spirit*.³⁶ So we can’t simply assume that what Hegel refers to as “subjectivity” and as “freedom” in the Logic is meant to have *all* of the features that we may associate with freedom; rather, it seems likely from the layout of topics in the System that the Logic is meant to analyze a structure that is essential to what we understand as freedom, but will require much further development before it acquires all of the features that we associate with freedom. (I already mentioned in the previous chapter this distinctive feature of Hegel’s procedure, in his System, that the most fundamental or germinal structures of the “subject” and freedom present themselves, in the Doctrine of Being, long before they are articulated as “subjectivity” as such, and as the “realm of freedom,” in the Doctrine of the Concept; and a similar relationship holds between the Doctrine of the Concept and the *Philosophy of Spirit*.) In their simplest forms, it seems, subjectivity and the Concept need not yet involve what we would recognize as thought. So we should be prepared to find that Hegel is in fact using “freedom,” as well, in a wider sense than a Kantian might be inclined to use it – as encompassing modes of self-relationship that are not necessarily as developed as those that we tend to focus on under that heading, in human beings, but that have an important similarity to those developed forms, which makes it appropriate to class them all under the same overall title.

³⁶ This is despite the fact that in the Introduction to the *Science of Logic*, Hegel describes the “object” of logic as “thought, or more determinately, conceptual thought” (WL 5:35/GW 21:27,28/43). Evidently, the Logic, by itself, does not arrive at a full conception of its object; it is not a self-sufficient science. Only philosophy as a whole is self-sufficient in the sense that it analyzes all of the concepts that it employs.

Thus, when Klaus Düsing complains, as I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, that Hegel does not show “why, in fact, the separation between the substances [at the end of the Doctrine of Essence] must be overcome by a *thinking* and not just an essentially *existing* self-relationship,”³⁷ I think Hegel’s reply would be that Düsing is employing an overly simple dichotomy, because every “*existing* self-relationship” will involve (insofar as it is based on *negativity*) something that is *akin to* “thought,” but many of them will not involve what we would normally describe as thought, *as such*. That is why Hegel’s development of concepts, in the *Encyclopaedia*, arrives at what he calls “freedom” in the Concept, but only arrives at “thought” in the *Philosophy of Spirit*. This complex state of affairs results from Hegel’s early introduction of negativity, in the Doctrine of Being, and his painstakingly step-by-step development of its successive forms. And that in turn reflects his conviction that while freedom has an important relationship to thought, it also has important features – those embodied in negativity and in the Concept – that don’t involve the presence of thought, as such. But the other side of the coin is that Hegel *does* show that something that is *akin to* thought – namely, the Concept – is needed in order to resolve the problems represented by the active and the passive substance, at the end of the Doctrine of Essence. (Just as something that is *akin to* thought – namely, true infinity – was needed in order to resolve the problems of finitude, in the Doctrine of Being.) Hegel shows, as we have seen, that freedom in the sense of self-determination is needed in order to resolve the problems represented by the active and the passive substance; and he goes on to show that this freedom involves a new structure, which he calls the “Concept,” and he calls it that precisely because of its affinity to processes of thought (even though it is not meant to *be* “thought” in the most literal sense of the word “thought,” which is something that we will arrive at only in the *Philosophy of Spirit*).

As for Rolf-Peter Horstmann’s view that Hegel’s oft-repeated claims that (as Horstmann puts it) “thinking and being are one and the same, or that only thinking has being,” reflect a “conviction” that Hegel “never felt any need to question,”³⁸ it seems quite uncharitable, in view of the fact that on one reasonable and not very novel interpretation, which

37 Klaus Düsing, *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976), p. 231; emphasis added.

38 Article, “Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich,” in *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), vol. 4, pp. 265 and 266 (emphasis added).

is the interpretation for which I am arguing, Hegel's entire philosophical system, in the *Encyclopedia*, is intended to prove the truth of that conviction.³⁹

In the next chapter, we will see how Hegel conceptualizes manifested self-determination, or freedom, as the Concept and the "Idea."

39 It could be true that Hegel never *doubted* the truth of his idealist claims. But he was clearly very well aware that this truth could not be taken for granted, but had to be demonstrated.

FREEDOM, GOD, AND THE REFUTATION
OF RATIONAL EGOISM
(*SCIENCE OF LOGIC* III)

5.1. From Substance to the “Concept”

Hegel introduces the Concept as a permutation of the pattern that was constituted by the “active” and “passive” substances. The two sides of necessity – actuality and possibility – which had taken the form of the active and the passive substance, now become the “singular” (*das Einzelne*) and the “universal” (*das Allgemeine*). The difference, however, from the previous pattern, is (1) that the two moments that I just mentioned, the singular and the universal, are joined by a third moment, the “particular” (*die Besonderheit*), which shares features with each of them (determinateness with the singular, and “reflection into itself” with the universal), and especially (2) that all three are now described as “totalities” (WL 6:240/GW 11:409,20,25/571), by which Hegel means that each contains, implicitly, the entire system composed of all three of them (WL 6:252/GW 12:16,26/582, and EL §160). All of this is due to the fact that, since the two sides of the previous pattern (namely, the active and passive substances, and their predecessors) have now been “manifested” as “identical,” they can be distinguished and related to each other only by a completely new type of concept, which is what “totality” and the “Concept” will be.

The Concept, Hegel writes,

is to be regarded in the first instance simply as the third to *being* and *essence*, to the *immediate* and to *reflection* (WL 6:245/GW 12:11,23–24/577). [It is] the *unity* of being and essence. Essence is the *first negation* of being, which thus became *Shine*; the Concept is the *second negation* or negation of this [first] negation, and is therefore being once more, but being that has been restored as its infinite mediation and negativity in itself. . . . The Concept . . . is the truth of the substantial relation, in which being and

essence achieve the fulfilment of their self-standingness and their determination through each other. The truth of substantiality proved to be the *substantial identity*, which is just as much – and is only as – positedness.

(WL 5:269–270/GW 12:29,2–16/596; emphasis added)

Essence was a negation of being in that it represented solely the “internal,” the “in itself” dimension, or “reflection,” as opposed to the immediacy that was being. The Concept negates this first negation, essence, and “restores” being, with its immediacy, by “manifesting” the unity of inner and outer, possibility and actuality, substance and accident, cause and effect, passive substance and active substance, that the “substantial relation” (or “actuality”) was about. In this sense, the Concept is “the *truth of the substantial relation*.”¹ This “manifestation” creates a new immediacy, and thus “restores” being – but it restores being and its immediacy “as [their] infinite *mediation* and negativity in itself”: that is, it restores immediacy as infinite *mediation*, in accordance with the famous saying of the Introduction to the Doctrine of Being that “There is nothing in heaven or in nature or spirit or anywhere else that does not equally contain both immediacy and mediation, so that these two determinations reveal themselves to be *unseparated* and *inseparable* and the opposition between them to be a nullity” (WL 5:66/GW 21:54,23–28/68; see 4.7). The restored being and immediacy, the “manifestation,” that is the Concept will not be mediated in the way that essence was mediated – by “reflection.” But in order to be the truth of essence and reflection, as well as the truth of being, it will contain something that is equivalent to reflection’s “positedness.” This will be the Concept’s *determinateness*, in the two forms of particularity and singularity.

On the other hand, the moment of the Concept that corresponds to reflection’s “positing” – namely, the Concept’s “pure relation to itself, which is this relation by positing itself through negativity” (WL 6:274–275/GW 12:33,31–32/601) – Hegel will call “universality” (*Allgemeinheit*). Being is something simple (*einfach*) that immediately disappears in its opposite, or nothing; “the universal, on the other hand, is the simple which is just as much the *richest* in itself, because it is the Concept” (WL 6:275/GW 12:33,11–13/602), which inherits the mediation that went with essence and reflection; and because it has this richness or

¹ This truth can be tracked as the “substantial *identity*” at WL 6:233/GW 11:404,17/566, originating at WL 6:225/GW 11:398,18/559 and terminating at WL 6:239/GW 11:408,15/570.

mediation within it, otherness and opposition do not cause it to disappear. The universal is

the *soul* of the concrete, which it indwells, unimpeded and equal to itself in the concrete's manifoldness and diversity. It is not dragged into the process of becoming, but *continues itself* undisturbed through that process and possesses the power of unalterable, undying self-preservation.

(WL 6:276/GW 12:34,8–12/602)

By “soul,” here, Hegel means, not an added “component,” but rather something like the Aristotelian “form” that actualizes the potential constituted by its “matter.” The “soul,” as Aristotle conceives of it, is precisely such a form. As a “soul” in this sense, the universal is not separable from or opposed to the concrete; it is because of this intimacy that the universal can be “unimpeded and equal to itself” *in* the concrete's manifoldness and diversity.

5.2. The Concept as “Free *Love*” and True Infinity

At the same time that the “universal” avoids “disappearing into” its opposite, as “being” did (see previous paragraph), it also avoids being drawn into the “relativity” to others that characterized the domain of essence. “What was mere *contingency*, for substance as such, is the Concept's own mediation with itself, its own immanent reflection” (WL 6:276–277/GW 12:34–35/603): it's all within the “identity” that is the Concept's self-determination. Consequently,

the Concept is not the abyss of formless substance, or necessity as the *inner* identity of things or states that are distinct from and limit each other; rather, as absolute negativity, it is the shaper and creator [*das Formierende und Erschaffende*]. . . . The universal is therefore *free* power [*die freie Macht*]; it is itself and overgrasps [*übergreift*] its other, but not by doing *violence* to it [*nicht als ein Gewaltsames*]; on the contrary, the universal in its other is tranquil and *with itself*. We have called it free power, but it could also be called *free love* and *limitationless blessedness* [*schrankselose Seligkeit*], because it bears itself toward what is different from it as toward itself; in it, it has returned to itself.

(WL 6:277/GW 12:35,38–6/603)

These remarkable theological claims – “the shaper and creator,” “love,” “blessedness” – make sense in the light of the interpretation of Essence and the transition to the Concept that I have been developing,

according to which negativity, in Essence and in Essence's successors, carries with it the potential for *transcendence* that Hegel developed in true infinity, so that a significant part of Hegel's overall intention in the Logic is to capture, in his successive formulations, what he takes to be true in traditional theism – while at the same time avoiding (as he did initially through his critique of “spurious infinity”) what he takes to be false in it. The argument in “Quality” moved upward, from determinate being to the something and from the finite to the infinite, while here, in the “Concept,” it is moving downward, from universality to determinateness, but in both cases, Hegel aims to formulate a relationship between the transcendent and the immanent, the “creator” and the “created,” which is hierarchical but does not oppose them to each other in such a way that they are both rendered finite by it. The universal has “power,” Hegel tells us; it is clearly superior to, or has authority over, particular determinateness. That is how it captures the traditional notion of transcendence. Similarly, he earlier ascribed “absolute power” to substance, over against its accidents (WL 6:220/GW 11:395,5/556). But unlike substance's superiority, the universal's superiority entails no violence, no *Gewalt*; the universal “bears itself toward” particular determinateness “as toward *itself*,” having “returned to itself” in it, so that the universal's “power” can just as appropriately be called “love.”² Whereas, by contrast, the passive substance *did* suffer “violence,” which Hegel there described as “the *appearance* of power, or power as something *external*” (WL 6:235/GW 11:405,26/567). When the passive and active substances became identical – when their “inner identity” was manifested, thus giving rise to the free Concept – something emerged that is *truly* transcendent, because it doesn't define itself through opposition to (or as something external to) what it “transcends.” By embodying

2 In his “Begriff und Realität. Hegels Aufhebung des metaphysischen Wahrheitsbegriffs,” in Rolf-Peter Horstmann, ed., *Seminar: Dialektik in der Philosophie Hegels* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), Michael Theunissen exhibits sympathy with important aspects of Hegel's philosophical theology (“a new alliance, which is just as remote from deifying man as from annihilating him” [p. 356]), but unfortunately he takes Hegel's talk of the “power” of the Concept as implying “conflict [*Kampf*]” and “the complete subjection [*Unterwerfung*] of the other” (p. 355). I don't think Theunissen could interpret Hegel's talk of “power” in this way if he understood negativity, and the finite's self-transcendence, together with the permutations of negativity in Essence and the Concept, as (as I've argued that Hegel intends them) pursuing the selfhood and reality of determinate being and the finite. The “power” that the Concept exercises, then, is simply the authority of one's own selfhood and reality (see 3.16), which is why Hegel can describe what exercises that power as “not violent” and as “free *love*.”

power that bears itself toward particular determinateness as it bears itself toward itself – that is, that bears itself toward particular determinateness with *love* – the Concept's version of transcendence avoids the kind of ("spuriously infinite") opposition between the universal and determinateness that would render the universal finite and thus vitiate its claim to transcendence. As I pointed out in 3.11, the formula of "with itself in its other" first appears in connection with true infinity, and its reappearance here – in the statement that "the universal *in its other* is tranquil and *with itself*" – is not accidental. The Concept embodies true infinity more explicitly than anything that preceded it, after true infinity itself. With the Concept, we begin to see Hegel's reply to the challenge that was presented by "atomism" and egoism, at the end of "Quality": namely, a reformulation of true infinity that enables it to withstand that challenge (as I will explain in the remainder of this chapter).

5.3. Why Call This a "Concept"?

Hegel goes on to say that there are two kinds of "universality." In the first, the universal relates the particular to what is other than it, and the two are "resolved" in a "higher universal" in the way that species are resolved in a higher genus (WL 6:278–279/GW 12:36,18–24/604–605). This is the familiar conception of universality, in which a wider, more abstract concept is more "universal," in the sense of more inclusive, than a narrower, more specific concept. Hegel describes the determinateness of this kind of universality as "shining *outward*," into relations with "others," and as the "first negation" of universality. In the second kind of universality, however, whose determinateness Hegel describes as "shining *inward*," and as the "*second* negation" of universality (WL 6:278/GW 12:35–36,27–38),

life, I, spirit, absolute Concept are not universals merely in the sense of higher genera, but are concretes whose determinatenesses, too, are not species or lower genera but genera which, in their reality, are simply in themselves and fulfilled by that.

(WL 6:279/GW 12:36,27–31/605)

The "universals" that Hegel mentions here – life, I, spirit, absolute Concept – all have the "superiority" or "authority" that I was just describing the Concept's universality as having: They all have (loving) power over their determinatenesses, a power that their determinatenesses do not have over them. They all have, in one form or another, the role of specifying, from within themselves, a world. The "I" is Hegel's first example

of the Concept itself, in his introductory section, “On the Concept in General” (WL 6:253/GW 12:17,28/583), which I will discuss in the remainder of this section. “Life” is the first, immediate form of the Idea, and the Idea is the Concept as objective as well as subjective (see 5.10–5.16). “Spirit,” finally, is “the Idea that has arrived at its being-for-self” (EG §381/8), so it is again a form of the Concept. Thus the universals that Hegel mentions are all versions of the universality of the Concept, which has the distinctive superiority, authority, or (loving) “power” that I’ve been describing.

Why does Hegel call this superior, authoritative, and loving “power” the “*Concept*,” if, as he makes clear, its superiority, authority, or power is not that of a conventional “concept” or “universal,” such as we use to sort out and categorize objects? First, the two kinds of concept or universal both play roles in (non-“violently”) determining, or specifying, determinate things. The more familiar kind does so, as Hegel pointed out, by “shining *outward*,” comparing things to others. That is a “first negation” of universality in that it makes things determinate or non-“universal” by specifying their relations to others (that are similar to them or different). The second kind of concept or universal, on the other hand – the one that Hegel is bringing to our attention – makes things determinate or non-“universal” by “shining *inward*,” expressing the “own, immanent character” (WL 6:278/GW 12:36,8/604) that determines them. This is a “second negation” in that it seeks to return to the universality that was negated by the first negation, but to do so in a way that brings out that universality’s selfhood (its “own, immanent character”) as determining the determinate.

But beyond the fact that they both determine, or specify, determinate things, there is another, more specific feature that the two kinds of “concept” or “universal” share. This emerges when we ask what it is that makes it possible for us to take seriously the idea of an “own, immanent character” that determines its specific determinations. I suggest that the idea of something being self-determining by its own, immanent character derives its plausibility – just as the “ought” in “Quality” derived its plausibility – from our experience of stepping back, in thought, from particular felt desires or inclinations and asking ourselves whether it makes sense, all things considered, to act on those desires or inclinations. That is, it derives its plausibility from the apparent role of *thought* in making possible a kind of “ownness” of which it is unclear how *unthinking* things could be capable – the apparent role of thought to which Kant drew attention (see 1.2.2 and 2.1) with his account of the Categorical Imperative, and to which Plato and Aristotle also draw

attention, in their works on ethics (see 2.3). It's because of this role of thought in our paradigmatic experiences of what seems to be self-determination or "ownness" that it's natural to conceive of the process by which the successor to negativity and essence and substance (and so forth) determines itself to particularity, as a "*conceptual*," a thought-like process. It seems to be the presence of something like thought that makes it possible for something – namely, what Hegel is calling "universality" – to have the kind of superiority, authority, or loving power over determinate particulars that the successor of negativity and essence and substance (and so forth) would have to have in order to embody what was true in what it succeeds. As I mentioned in 4.18, "thought" *as such* doesn't enter the development of Hegel's system until well into the *Philosophy of Spirit*. But it is clear that something *analogous* to thought is playing a role as early as the "Ought," in the first part of the Logic; and it seems to be doing so here, in the Doctrine of the Concept, as well, explaining why Hegel finds it appropriate to give the title of "Concept" to the new type of self-determination that he arrives at here.

Against this background, we should be able to understand why the illustration – "something familiar, a commonplace of our ordinary thinking" – that Hegel offers us in his introductory section "On the Concept in General," is the "*I*": "... the I is the pure Concept itself which, as Concept, has come into determinate being" (WL 6:253/GW 12:17,30–33/583). Hegel goes on to say that Kant grasped, in effect, the distinctive nature of the Concept, in his notion of the transcendental unity of apperception:

It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the *unity* which constitutes the nature of the Concept is recognized as the original synthetic unity of apperception, as unity of the *I think*, or of self-consciousness. . . . An object, says Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*, second edition, p. 137), is that in the *concept* of which the manifold of a given intuition is unified. But all unifying of representations demands a unity of consciousness which alone constitutes the connection of the representations with the object and therewith their *objective validity*. . . . In point of fact, the *comprehension* of an object consists in nothing else than that the I makes it *its own*, pervades it and brings it into *its own form*, that is, into the universality that is immediately a determinateness, or the determinateness that is immediately universality.

(WL 6:254–255/GW 12:17–18,25–25/584–585)

As Hegel carefully goes on to explain, the "unity of consciousness" that Kant pictures the I as producing is not the subjective connectedness

of (as we say) a “*stream* of consciousness,” but rather the kind of *objective* connectedness that is achieved by employing the “categories” (WL 6:254–255/GW 12:18,7–16/584), such as substance, causation, and objective temporal sequence. Their connection with the I is, I suggest, that it is only by organizing its world in this way that the I can conceive of itself as having a comprehensible history as *part of* that objective world. The I makes the object “its own” by understanding the object in terms that allow the I to identify *itself*, in a coherent way, *in relation to* the object. (In Kant’s example, the I understands the sequence of events in a ship’s floating down the river with the aid of the concepts of substance, causation, and temporal sequence, in such a way that the I’s perceptions of those events make sense as parts of an identity of the I through time and space that is related in an intelligible way to those events [*Critique of Pure Reason* A 192/B237].) The “universality,” then, in the final sentence of the block quotation, is the I’s coherent understanding of itself; and the “determinateness” that this universality “is immediately” (because this determinateness is what makes possible the I’s coherent understanding of itself – its functioning *as* an I) is the determinate order of the objective world.

What this picture of the I has to do with the “*ought*” and (thus) with going beyond finitude, and with freedom, is that the I likewise goes beyond the merely “given” contents of subjective consciousness, by unifying them into a conception of an objective world of which it is a part. Indeed, in going beyond them, it declares and responds to their nothingness, in themselves, just as the “ought” declares and responds to the nothingness, in themselves, of finite desires and inclinations (their “passing over” into each other, their failure to be what they are by virtue of themselves). The merely “given” contents of subjective consciousness are, in fact, nothing in themselves; it is only insofar as they can be integrated in some way into a conception of a world, in relation to or as a part of which the integrating I can identify itself, that they have meaning (compare 4.7, above). In this way, the integrating I is simply another instance, alongside the “ought” and its transcendence of finitude, of thought’s making possible the *becoming* of something that is in keeping with selfhood, that is autonomous or free, and thus is real.³

3 Robert Pippin correctly focusses on the passage that I have just been discussing, from “On the Concept in General,” as crucial for understanding Hegel’s relation to Kant (*Hegel’s Idealism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], pp. 18, 232), but since he doesn’t identify the issue about “reality” that I have argued that the “Quality” chapter addresses, or the way in which Hegel draws on Kant’s “ought” in addressing that issue (as I explained in 3.7), he is not in a position to interpret the Concept and its relation

Hegel left us with a potentially confusing picture insofar as the Kantian concept that he brings explicitly to bear in "Quality" – namely, the "ought" – stems (on its face) from Kant's practical philosophy, whereas the Kantian concept that he brings explicitly to bear in "On the Concept in General" – namely, the transcendental unity of apperception – stems from Kant's theory of knowledge. We might wonder whether this signals that the contrast between practice and theory is somehow relevant to the relationship between the Doctrine of Being and the Doctrine of the Concept. However, the distinction between practice and theory itself in fact enters Hegel's exposition explicitly later on in the Doctrine of the Concept, as part of the Idea, and there is no reason (apart from the divergence in Kantian borrowings, as between the Doctrine of Being and the Doctrine of the Concept) to think that the distinction between practice and theory is meant to play any role at all, prior to its explicit introduction. Indeed, it seems clear that the two topics ("practice" and "theory") are quite intentionally intermixed to the point of indistinguishability, in "Quality." So there is good reason to think that Hegel does not intend to draw our attention, in "On the Concept in General," to Kant's theory of knowledge *as opposed* to his ethical theory, but rather that he is thinking, essentially, of what Kant's two theories have in common – namely, thought's enabling the becoming of something that is in keeping with selfhood, that is autonomous or free, and thus is real – and that this feature that the two theories have in common can be alluded to, for the sake of brevity, by citing either one of them.

*Hegel is addressing the issue, prior to any discussion of what qualities there may be in the world (that is, "theory") or what actions one ought to engage in (that is, "practice"), of what is being, what is real, what "one" is. And the relevance of thought, concepts, and "universality," in connection with that question, is that their potential or actual presence alters what being and reality are, what "one" is. If the kind of thought, concepts and universality that make autonomy or freedom or selfhood possible are potentially or actually present, then a kind of reality – namely, self-determining reality, which is "reality" as Hegel defined it in "Quality" – is potentially or actually present, which would otherwise be out of the picture.*⁴

to Kant as a further development of *true infinity* and its relation to Kant, in the way that I'm suggesting here.

⁴ Thus I think that Kenneth Westphal is mistaken when he suggests that Hegel may think "that determinations of value are the preeminent philosophical concern" (*Hegel's*

In practice, for readers who are not already convinced of the reality of transcendent freedom, God, or the soul, Kant's argument in his ethical works for the transcendent character of freedom is perhaps more likely to be immediately appealing than his technical arguments about the "I," in his theory of knowledge. This may be the reason why Hegel chose the ethical "ought," rather than the transcendental unity of apperception, as his initial way of formulating the relevance of Kant's thinking to ontology, in "Quality." But in principle, either concept could have done the job. *The spuriously infinite version of the unity of apperception would be the metaphysical conceptions of God and the soul that Kant criticizes in the Transcendental Dialectic of the Critique of Pure Reason*, but that nevertheless do point, like the "ought," to the possibility of going beyond the finite; and then the *truly* infinite version of God and the soul – in contradistinction to Kant's skepticism about them – would be a version that understands them not as a "power existing outside" the finite, but as the finite's self-transcendence in pursuit of its own reality. Indeed, this seems to be just what the Doctrine of the Concept assumes has been achieved by the Doctrines of Being and Essence, when it expresses their outcome with the *theological* language that I interpreted in the previous section (5.2), and what the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* assume when they say that true infinity is the key to understanding God (VPRel. 1:213, 317/1:309, 425). In connection with the "ought" and freedom, Hegel finds it necessary to criticize Kant for succumbing to a spurious infinity, whereas in connection with God and the soul, Hegel thinks Kant makes the apparently opposite mistake of succumbing to unnecessary skepticism. But *in both cases, Kant's mistake is ultimately rooted in his failure to conceive of the "middle" path of true infinity or the Concept.*

Thus, the reason why Hegel leaves us with two very different conceptions of universality or of concepts – namely, the "first negation" conception, according to which they are means of categorizing what we find in the world, and the "second negation" conception, according to which they are means of achieving selfhood – is precisely because he wants to direct our attention to this preliminary question – which is neither theoretical nor practical, or is both – of what is being, what is real, or what "one" is, and to the relevance to that question of the *functioning*

Epistemological Realism, pp. 113–114), which we can pursue *after* we've established that we can know truth in the sense of "correctness." Rather, Hegel thinks (certainly in the Logic) that reality itself involves value, as a necessary aspect of self-determination (via the "Ought" or the "Concept").

presence of concepts or universality (as exhibited in the “ought” and in the unity of apperception – that is, in the pursuit of selfhood). Where there is a pursuit of selfhood, being is not merely finite and other-determined, or “relative,” but rather is self-determining, and to that extent more real, in the sense that Hegel defined in “Quality.” Seen in relation to this goal of “reality,” Hegel’s accounts of the Concept, the “concrete universal,” and so forth – together with his insistence that “it is not the material given by intuition and representation that ought to be vindicated as the *real* in contrast to the Concept” (WL 6:258/GW 12:21,27–30/587) – are much less confusing and obscure than they are when they are taken by themselves (if that were possible).

5.4. Substance and Subject

The fact that “substance” (in Essence) has been superseded by the Concept, which – insofar as it has the manifest kinship to thought that we have been examining, and that justifies its name – qualifies as “subject,” is the long-awaited demonstration that, as Hegel had announced in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the true must be grasped and expressed “not only as *substance*, but equally as *subject*” (3: 23/PS §17; see 3.2 and 3.12). The final overcoming of Essence’s contrast between inner and outer, which is accomplished when the “inner identity [of possibility and actuality] is *manifested*,” as a result of the “movement” of causation (WL 6:239/GW 11:409,2–6/571), yields “subjectivity” (WL 6:240/GW 11:409,6/571) because it yields something in which the two poles, which previously were opposed to each other (as in possibility and actuality, substance and accident, cause and effect, active and passive substance), are brought together into identity by something that, as I have been arguing, is comparable to thought. What Essence has done, which distinguishes this result from the anticipation of it that I found in true infinity (3.12), is to bring out and underline, and then to supersede, the distinction between the inner and the outer, the “inwardizing” (*Erinnerung*) of essence and (by contrast) the “external” nature of being and existence. To supersede this distinction is *to establish the resulting “subjectivity” as more fundamental than either being or existence, as such, or the internal (essence)*. So this “subjectivity” itself is not something internal, such as essence or the “stream of consciousness” that I contrasted with Kant’s unity of apperception. *Instead, it is a conception of reality as such, which, insofar as it encompasses both being or existence and negativity or essence, encompasses both something like objects and something like consciousness.* (I say “something like,” because “objects” as such and

“consciousness” as such are, in fact, later stages in the development of this “subjectivity.”) It is called “subjectivity” because of the unifying role that it assigns to something that is comparable, because of the transcendence of finitude that it involves, to thought. But this “thought” is not in any way “internal,” or subordinate to some other reality; rather, it is supreme, or (as I said earlier) superior – and, at the same time, “loving,” insofar as it bears itself toward the particular as toward itself (5.2).

To appreciate the power of Hegel’s argument to the “Concept,” it is useful to compare it to an important recent attempt to find a similar power mainly in the version of the argument that Hegel gave earlier in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Writing about Hegel’s account of subjectivity both in the *Phenomenology* and in the *Logic*, before engaging in some detail with the text of the former, John McDowell describes Hegel’s goal as the avoidance of “a certain sort of philosophical anxiety. We shall no longer need to be troubled by the spectre of a gulf between subject and object, which is the pretext for a transcendental scepticism,”⁵ as in Kant’s repeated assertions that we cannot know what things are “in themselves.” McDowell describes this goal of Hegel’s as an “equipoise between subjective and objective, between thought and its subject matter” (p. 3). He thinks that Kant was pursuing a similar goal in his Transcendental Deduction of the categories, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but that in the end, by restricting the application of the categories to “things as they are given to *our* sensibility” (ibid.), with that sensibility’s special attachment to space and time, Kant left an “unassimilated subjectivity, a subjectivity [namely, this attachment to space and time] with no balancing objectivity,” and a corresponding “unassimilated objectivity” (in the “perhaps non-spatial and non-temporal thing in itself”) (ibid.), and thus failed to achieve the desired equipoise. In pursuit of it, McDowell writes, Hegel’s

whole-heartedness brings everything [including, presumably, space and time – R. Wallace] within the scope of free subjective activity. . . . It is Kant’s *halfheartedness* [that is, his restriction of the categories to things as they are given to “*our* sensibility”] that spoils his attempt at an equipoise between subjective and objective. Expanding the scope of intellectual freedom [as Hegel does by bringing everything within the scope of free subjective activity] does not tip the scale to the side of the subjective, as if

5 John McDowell, “The Apperceptive I and The Empirical Self: Towards a Heterodox Reading of ‘Lordship and Bondage’ in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*,” *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 47/48 (2003):1.

the objective (so-called, we would have to say) can only be a projection of subjective activity, taken to be independently intelligible. That is just what happens in Kant's unsuccessful attempt at the equipoise. . . . Achieving a genuine balance would allow subjectivity to be conceived as engaging with what is genuinely objective. To hold that the very idea of objectivity can be understood only as part of such a structure is exactly not to abandon the independently real in favor of projections from subjectivity.

(p. 4; emphasis added)

McDowell's point is that what he calls "the scope of free subjective activity" or "the scope of intellectual freedom" (which correspond to what Hegel calls the "Concept" or "subjectivity") *must not be understood as "subjective" in a sense that implies the absence of "engagement with what is genuinely objective."* Rather, they must be understood as engaged, throughout, with objectivity – presumably in the way that I described in my brief synopsis of Kant's account of the categories, in the previous section (5.3).

We can express McDowell's point in the language of Hegel's Logic by saying that "subjectivity" (in the sense that's identical with the "Concept," and that corresponds to McDowell's "free subjective activity") emerges, within philosophy's systematic development of its concepts (that is, within the Logic), as a *unity* (a "manifested identity") that supersedes the contrast between outer and inner, being (or existence) and essence. And "objects" and "consciousness," as such, emerge as developments of this same overarching unity (in the second section of the Concept and in Nature, and in the Idea and Spirit, respectively). Since "subjectivity" (the "Concept") is such a unity, and since objects and consciousness emerge from it, they all embody, by their very nature, an equipoise between subjective and objective: They preclude any gulf between subject and object, any possession by one side of features that have no corresponding means of comprehension, on the other side. The development of these concepts indicates their necessary relation to one another; there is no way in which something that is appropriately called an "objective reality" can exist that doesn't have the conceptual relationships that the development of reality and the development of objectivity reveal. Hegel's argument for the conclusion that, as McDowell puts it, "the very idea of objectivity *can be understood only as part of such a structure,*" is that *the very idea of a subject matter for discourse, which Hegel identified initially as "being" and subsequently as "reality," has led, through the stages that we have been studying, to the conception of subjectivity or the Concept, of which objectivity will emerge as a development.*

And objectivity in its turn, and its successor, which is Nature, will turn out to require the more inclusive realities of the Idea and Spirit, which reproduce on more developed levels the unity of the Concept (just as the Concept reproduces on a more developed level the unity of true infinity). *So no un-“balanced” objectivity will ever be viable, by itself.* We can conclude, then, that fully articulate discourse will have to be conducted in terms of an objectivity and an overarching unity (“subjectivity” or the Concept; the Idea; or Spirit) that have this structure, in relation to each other.

The reason why the overarching unity is called “subjectivity” is, as I explained in 5.3, that in order to embody the transcendence of finitude, it has to have the character of something like thought. The Concept’s “subjectivity” *itself* cannot very well be described as “engaging with what is genuinely objective,” since the category of objectivity doesn’t exist yet; the contrast between objective and subjective, and thus the category of objectivity, develop out of this “subjectivity” (in the second and third parts of the Doctrine of the Concept, and in Nature and Spirit). However, the Concept’s “subjectivity” originated, via the long argument that we have been studying, in an analysis of *determinate being*, which betrays no bias toward what’s ordinarily thought of as “subjective” (see 3.4). So that Hegel’s account of this “subjectivity” (as well as of the subsequent subjective/objective contrast) cannot be accused of “subjectivism,” in what it presupposes. The prominence of “subjectivity” (as thought) in the culminating third part of the Logic and in Hegel’s system as a whole – that is, the fact that his system is an “idealism” – is a result of *argument* rather than a result of an underlying bias that was built into his premises. The Concept’s “subjectivity” “engages with what is genuinely objective” in the sense that this subjectivity develops from and into structures that are characterized just as much by objectivity as by subjectivity. What is distinctive in Hegel’s system is not a neglect of objectivity, but only that it locates objectivity within a context (an overarching unity) that has the character of thought.

McDowell remarks, following Hans-Georg Gadamer, that “we need [in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*] to arrive at the significance of apperception *through the experience of mere consciousness*, rather than just starting with [apperception] (like Kant and Fichte), because just starting with it leads only to the subjective idealism of §238” (of the *Phenomenology*),⁶

6 Op. cit., p. 14, note 17 (emphasis added).

which lacks the necessary “balance” between subjectivity and objectivity. Insofar as it puts apperception, or “subjectivity,” within a broader context, in this way, the development of the *Phenomenology* does parallel that of the *Logic*. But it's only in the *Logic* that this context that Hegel gives to apperception is explicitly *ontological*, so that we can understand subjectivity and objectivity as aspects of reality, as such, thus understanding both how Hegel differs from Kant, in regard to ontology, and what Hegel means by his own “idealism.”

5.5. Particularity and Singularity: “Abstractness” and “Emptiness” versus “Concreteness”

How the Concept preserves its superiority or “power” while avoiding a “spuriously infinite” opposition between universality and determinateness, we will see from its development as “particularity” and “singularity.” The Concept must be determinate in order to preserve Essence's dimension of “positedness” (which in turn embodies the polar structure of negativity, the negation of the negation). Initially, this determinateness is “particularity” (*Besonderheit*). Hegel says that this particularity, initially, cannot involve a plurality of kinds, for which there is “no inner measure or principle” (WL 6: 280/GW 12:37,2/606).⁷ Instead, the particular is simply a duplicate of the universal. “The universal determines *itself*; thus it is itself the particular” (WL 6: 281/GW 12:38,19/606). In this way, it is “the totality and principle of its diversity, which is determined wholly and solely by the universal itself” (WL 6:281/GW 12:38,25/606); its two “kinds” (the Concept as universal and the Concept as particular) are “*onefold*” (*einfach*, “simple”) (WL 6:280/GW 12:37,11/606).⁸

Hegel now describes the initial consequence, for universality, of the determinateness that it has given itself. Universality becomes, as he calls it, “abstract.” “Abstract” universality is a universality that is “opposed to” determinacy (WL 6:275/GW 12:33,18/602), so that the particular is merely “clothed” by it (WL 6:283/GW 12:39,28/608) – its unity

7 Miller translates “*insofern es deren eben nicht mehrere gibt*” as “because there are no more of them” (p. 606), rather than “because there is no plurality of them,” thus rendering the argument unintelligible.

8 In nature, Hegel grants, a genus often contains more than two kinds; this he calls “the *impotence* of nature, that it cannot adhere to and exhibit the strictness of the Concept and runs wild in this blind unconceptual manifoldness”; we should not take this for more than “the abstract aspect of *nullity*” (WL 6: 283/GW 12:39,15/608; first emphasis added).

with the particular is “immediate” (WL 6:284/GW 12:40,6/608), rather than being “posited as a feature of” the universal (*an ihr selbst gesetzt*) (WL 6:284/GW 12:40,15/609). When, on the contrary, the universal’s unity with the particular is “posited as a feature of it,” the particular is a determinateness that “relates itself to itself” (WL 6:288/GW 12:43,6/612), and is called “singularity” (*Einzelheit*).

What this means is that the initial, “abstract” universality is one in which there is no recognition, on the part of the universal, that it needs to become determinate, and no recognition on the part of the determinate particular that it is a determination of a universal. Instead, the two are simply, flatly “opposed to” each other, as one kind of thing and another kind of thing. That is, there is nothing about the universal itself that calls for determination – its unity with the particular is not “posited as a feature of it” – and there is nothing about the particular itself that expresses its being a determination. Whereas, when the particular “relates itself to itself” as a determination, and thus as relating to a universal, and when (by the same token) the universal exhibits itself as something that *needs* to be determined (when its unity with the particular is “posited as a feature of it”), then they are both “totality”: They each embody the system that is composed of both of them. This is necessary because as “manifestation,” the Concept is supposed to overcome the opposition of outer and inner, Being and Essence – an opposition that recurs in the form of the opposition (the merely immediate unity) of particular and abstract universal. To overcome this opposition, each of its poles must embody the totality, in the way that Hegel describes.

The result, “singularity,” is also described by Hegel as the *concrete* – as opposed to the abstract – *universal* (compare PR §§6R, 24R). The concrete universal, or the Concept as singularity, is the same phenomenon as the second type of universality, the “own, immanent character” (WL 6:278/GW 12:36,8/604) that Hegel referred to earlier. Now, he describes it as being “the principle of its differences . . . ; the principle contains the beginning and the essence of its development and realisation; whereas any other way of determining the Concept” – such as the conventional determination of concepts as means of classification – “is sterile” (WL 6:285/GW 12:41,16–19/610). Another description that Hegel applies to this conventional conception – one that plays an important role in his application of his theory of the Concept to ethics – is that it is “empty”: “Every determinate concept is, of course, *empty* insofar as it does not contain the totality, but only a one-sided determinateness” (WL 6:285/GW 12:41,13/610). Thus,

"emptiness" signifies, for Hegel, *not the absence of any determinateness at all* (as he explicitly indicates at WL 6:285/GW 12:40,3–5/609), *but the absence, in particular, of "totality": of the unity of universal and particular in which they each embody the entire system that is composed of both of them.* By the same token, it also signifies the absence of the kind of relationship between universal and particular that Hegel describes as the relationship of "principle" to "development and realisation." The first instance of this sort of intimate relationship that we encountered in the Logic was, of course, true infinity (and its preformation as "negativity"). In true infinity, the finite was real only through the infinite, and the infinite was the self-superseding of the finite, so that each was (as Hegel says) "with itself in its other." Thus the finite, as real, embodies the infinite as well as itself, and the infinite, as true, embodies the finite as well as itself: They each embody the entire system that is composed of both of them. "Totality" and "principle and realisation" are, in effect, new names for what is already present in true infinity, with the addition (subsumed within the new formulation) of the dimensions of quantity and interiority.

"Abstract" or "empty" universality is, in Hegel's view, a "wrong way [*Abweg*], on which abstraction strays from the path of the Concept and forsakes the *truth*" (WL 6:296–297/GW 12:49,30–32/619; emphasis added), because it leads away from the issue that I described as that of "what is being, what is real, or what 'one' is" (5.3) – an issue that only concrete universality addresses – toward the description merely of contingent states of affairs with no particular relation to that issue. Such descriptions can, no doubt, be "true" in the sense of being "correct," but

whoever gives the name of *truth* to the *correctness* [*Richtigkeit*] of an intuition or a perception, or to the agreement of a representation with an object, at any rate has no expression left for that which is the subject matter and aim of philosophy. We should at least have to call the latter the *truth of reason*.

(WL 6:318/GW 12:65,4–9/636, emphasis added; cf. WL 6:29/GW 12:17,13–24/38; WL 6:265–266/GW 12:26,14–28/593)

Hegel himself generally reserves the honorific term, "truth," for this "truth of reason," which has to do with the fundamental issue that I described. "Reason" (*Vernunft*), here, means the faculty that deals with that issue, as opposed to the faculty – the "understanding" (*Verstand*) – that deals with issues of mere classification.

5.6. The “Emptiness” of Kant’s Principle of Ethics

Following up on the discussion of the “concrete universal” that I was just giving, this is a good point at which to look forward, for a moment, to the role that Hegel’s notion of “abstract” or “empty” universality plays in his critique of Kantian “morality,” in his *Philosophy of Right* and other writings about ethics.⁹ In 2.3, I quoted Hegel’s charge, against Kant, that although

knowledge of the will first gained a firm foundation and point of departure in the philosophy of Kant, through the thought of its infinite autonomy . . . – to cling on to a merely moral point of view without making the transition to the concept of ethics [the transition that Hegel himself makes in the PR] reduces this gain to an *empty formalism*, and moral science to an empty rhetoric of *duty for duty’s sake*. From this point of view, no immanent theory of duties is possible . . . a contradiction must be a contradiction with something, that is, with a content which is already fundamentally present as an established principle.

(PR 135R)

I mentioned in 2.3 that Hegel underestimates what Kant does toward finding “content” in his Categorical Imperative. For example, Hegel overlooks how the “universal law” test – could the agent will that her maxim be a universal law, at the same time that she wills to act on it herself? – can bring out a fundamental unfairness in the agent’s attitudes as between herself and others. But I suggested (following Allen Wood) that Hegel’s deeper charge against Kant’s treatment of the Categorical Imperative is that Kant assumes, without sufficient argument, that it is not possible to be fully autonomous without caring about the freedom and autonomy of others as well as of oneself (and thus about fairness) – which is a charge that I myself developed further in 2.7. What I want to point out here is how Hegel’s contrast between “concrete” universality, on the one hand, and “abstract” or “empty” universality, on the other, which he develops in the Doctrine of the Concept, lies behind and justifies this deeper charge that Wood and I think that Hegel is making against Kant’s ethics.

In the passage that I just quoted a second time, Hegel describes Kant’s ethical principle as formalistic and “empty,” and says that it provides no

⁹ I have found no discussion of Hegel’s “emptiness” charge against Kantian “morality” (in the *Philosophy of Right* and elsewhere) that examines Hegel’s explanation of what he means by “emptiness,” in the Doctrine of the Concept.

basis for an immanent theory of duties. In the Doctrine of the Concept, he explains what he means by this “emptiness” charge:

Every determinate concept is . . . *empty* insofar as it does not contain the *totality*, but only a one-sided determinateness. Even when it has some other concrete content, for example man, the state, animal, etc., it still remains an empty concept, since its determinateness is not the *principle* of its differences; a principle contains the beginning and the essence of its development and realization; any other determinateness of the notion, however, is sterile.

(WL 6:285/GW 12:41,13/610; emphasis added)

So to avoid being “empty,” a concept’s determinateness must be the principle of its differences (that is, of what it is differentiated into) – it must contain the beginning and the essence of its development and realization. Or it must contain the “totality,” which, as we recall, is the situation in which, rather than being indifferent to each other, both of the poles – the universality and the particularity – contain the entire system that’s composed of both of them, which has the result that the beginning and essence of any differentiation, development, or realization that takes place, must be contained in the universality. So when Hegel later calls Kant’s principle of autonomy or duty “empty,” what he means is that it fails to contain this “totality,” or the beginning and essence of its differentiation, development, and realization.

Is Hegel’s criticism of Kant, on this point, justified? To see whether it is *fully* justified, one would have to look at the full development of Kant’s ethical system, in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and the *Metaphysics of Morals* itself, and see how it compares with the development of ethics that Hegel presents in his *Philosophy of Spirit* and his *Philosophy of Right* (where Hegel’s development presumably contains the “totality,” and so forth, that Hegel thinks is missing from Kant’s development). Taken as a whole, this is obviously too large a task to undertake here. I have already argued in 2.7, however, that the development of Kant’s ethical system is incomplete in one key respect – namely, that Kant fails to demonstrate that the only way to be fully autonomous is to care about the freedom and autonomy of others as well as of oneself; and thus Kant fails to demonstrate that the fundamental principle of his ethics in fact generates an *ethics*. At this point in our study of the *Science of Logic*, where Hegel’s response to egoism has not yet become explicit, it remains to be seen whether Hegel’s system will do better than Kant’s does, in this respect. Hegel’s response to egoism emerges, in stages, in the second and third parts

of the Doctrine of the Concept (“Objectivity” and the “Idea”), and we will be studying it in the latter part of this chapter. We will discover there whether the “Concept” that Hegel is introducing here will in fact develop into a structured relationship *between* individuals, such as might eventually qualify as an ethics. If it does develop into such a relationship, and if my criticism in 2.7 of Kant’s efforts to do the same thing is correct, then at least in this one very important respect, Hegel’s “principle” does indeed “contain the beginning and the essence of” an ethical realization, whereas Kant’s does not.

5.7. The Concept and the Will (*Philosophy of Right*, Introduction)

We should also return here to the issue of the “alien”-ness or enslavement that the young Hegel had identified in Kant’s conception of the will (2.2), and how Hegel in his maturity proposes to preserve something like Kant’s idea of a “higher standard” that goes beyond the drives or inclinations, as such (so that it will be true that “knowledge of the will first gained a firm foundation and point of departure in the philosophy of Kant, through the thought of its infinite autonomy” [PR §135R]), but *without* subjecting the drives or inclinations to an “alien” or enslaving authority. Hegel’s solution to this problem was already implicit, of course, in true infinity, in which the infinite was to be understood as the self-transcendence of the finite, and thus not as something alien to the finite – a “power outside it” – which would be imposed upon it. This solution is restated in the Concept when the latter’s moments are described as “totalities,” each of which embodies the whole system of which they are moments, so that the particular, for example, itself embodies the universal, and the latter’s “power” over it (5.2) is not alien to it, but instead is (in one important sense) its own power.

Hegel restates this whole conception, as applied to the will, in §§5–7 of the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*. §5 describes the will’s (“abstract”) universality: the “absolute possibility of abstracting from every determination in which I find myself, the flight from every content as a limitation.” §6 describes its particularity: “the *finitude* or *particularization* of the ‘I,’” in which “‘I’ steps into determinate being [*Dasein*] in general.” And §7 describes its singularity [*Einzelheit*], as

the *self*-determination of the ‘I,’ in that it posits itself as the negative of itself, that is, as determinate and limited, and at the same time remains with itself [*bei sich*], that is, in its *identity* with itself and universality.

(PR §7; emphases altered)

That is, the will's singularity combines – is the “identity” of – determinateness (particularity) and universality; its universality is “with itself” in “the negative of itself” (in “its other,” in the famous formula). Hegel refers his readers back to the *Encyclopedia Logic*'s discussion of singularity (EL §§163–165) for an explanation of how this is possible. The gist of this explanation, again, is that universality and particularity must be understood as “totalities,” so that rather than being alien or indifferent to each other, “each of [the Concept's] moments is the whole that [the Concept] is, and is posited as an undivided unity with it” (EL §160; cf. EL §164 and WL 6:296–299/GW 12:49–51/618–621). In terms of the will, or practical decision-making, we could say: The “abstract” domain of reason and the “particular” domain of desires and inclinations must each be understood as containing the other – whereas, on the other hand, they must also be understood as different and opposed to each other. We are familiar with this pattern from true infinity: The infinite goes beyond the finite as such, and thus is *different from* and opposed to it; on the other hand, the infinite is the self-transcendence *of* the finite, and in that sense it is *identical with* the finite.

In the PR Introduction, Hegel goes on to argue that an arbitrary will [*Willkür*] that does “what it wants” [*was man wolle*] is not free because “it does not yet have itself as its content and end,” but instead pursues something that is “given to it” from outside (PR §15R). It must have itself as its “content and end” – we may interpret – in order to be fully “with itself,” in accordance with §7. The “arbitrariness” that fails to have itself as its content and end could be identified with either or both of the non-“rationalist” conceptions of freedom and responsibility that I described in 2.4 – namely, voluntarism and naturalist compatibilism – insofar as neither of those conceptions shows how the person promotes something, in her action, that is distinct from what is “given to her” from outside of her: Neither shows how the person's will has “itself as its content and end.” Voluntarism identifies nothing, other than the absence of external causation, that represents the agent herself; and naturalism identifies the agent with character traits which (we might think) she might wish to change, and some of which may produce actions that it seems she should not be held responsible for. So neither conception seems to identify something properly “internal to” the agent that we could identify with her freedom. This is why Hegel, like Kant, seeks to identify a kind of rational functioning that – unlike the mere absence of external causation, or the simple presence of desires or character traits – could be the agent's way of being *engaged* or *at work in*

(or at least capable of being engaged or at work in) her action. To have something like this will be for the will to have “itself,” and not just what it wants, as its content and end.

To characterize this rational functioning, Hegel describes in some detail how conflicting drives and inclinations, which have no “yardstick within” themselves showing how they should be combined (§17), can be “judged” as good or bad, or “purified” into a “rational system” or a “sum total of satisfaction” (§18–20) – but the “truth” behind this process, he says, is simply that the will must have “universality, or *itself* as infinite form, as its content, object, and end” (§21): That is, that in order to *exist*, as a (free) will, it must go beyond all the particular drives and inclinations (and likewise, one might add, particular character traits), by unifying them in a way in which they themselves cannot unify themselves.¹⁰ Hegel goes on to say that this sort of will is “*truly infinite*, because its object is itself, and therefore not something which it sees as *other* or as a *limitation*” (§22); and its universality is “concrete,” rather than “abstract” (§24R).

What the PR Introduction does not explain is (1) why a free will (or, for that matter, the “realm of Spirit” [PR §4]) needs to exist, at all, and (2) how the particular drives and inclinations can cease to function as an “other,” for the will, so that it can in fact have “itself,” rather than them, as its “object” (thus making its universality “concrete” rather than abstract). For (1), Hegel refers the reader (PR §4R) to EG §§440–482, which we’ll examine in Chapter 6, and for (2), he refers (PR §24R) to EL §§168–179 on “the various determinations of universality.” For both (1) and (2), however, I would suggest that the really indispensable background will be found in the argument to true infinity, in the “Quality” chapter of WL. A free will must exist because the finite must go beyond itself in order to be real – so it must achieve freedom, and to do so, it must (ultimately) embody a will. The arguments to the Concept, to Spirit, and to the will as an aspect of Spirit, spell out what is implicit in the argument to true infinity. And the reason why the particular drives and inclinations can cease to function as an “other,” for the will – the sense in which the drives and inclinations can “*originate in the will’s rationality*” (the remarkable unexplained statement from PR §11

10 Parallels to Hegel’s account, here, of how the will or the self emerges in the form of systematic thinking about how to reconcile and unify one’s desires can be found in Plato’s account of the rational part of the soul in *Republic* Book iv and vi–vii, and in Aristotle’s account of the human “function,” or *ergon*, in *Nicomachean Ethics* i–iii.

that I quoted in 2.2) – is, once again, that the will is a necessary element in the full *realization* (through freedom) of everything that is finite, including these drives and inclinations (a realization that will emerge as “rationality” when it becomes the “Idea,” later in the Doctrine of the Concept). Hegel avoids subjecting the drives or inclinations to an “alien” or enslaving authority by arguing that the finite must go beyond itself – in the “ought,” freedom, the Concept, Spirit, and the will – in order to be fully real, and thus the “universal” to which the drives and inclinations are subject is *the drives and inclinations themselves, in their full reality*. So when the will has “itself” as its “object,” it likewise has the drives and inclinations, in their full reality, as its object; they are not an “other or a limitation” for it, because, as their self-transcendence, it *is them*. Rather than setting up the will’s rational functioning as an *additional* content and end for itself, as Kant (in effect) does and thus creates the dualism of inclination versus reason that leads to the alien-ness or slavery (of the former to the latter) to which the young Hegel objected, Hegel understands the will’s rational functioning as the self-transcendence and the realization of *inclination* (and of everything else that’s finite), so that there is (ultimately) no conflict between reason and inclination, and no possibility of one of them being alien to or enslaving the other.¹¹

With regard to the problem of how to identify an aspect of the person through which she herself can be *engaged* or *at work* in her actions (rather than merely being the absence of external causes, or the presence of possibly problematic character traits), Hegel’s conception not only identifies such an aspect – in the process of “judgment,” “purification,” “sum total,” and so forth – but makes it the core of the person’s reality, superior (in this way) to the features, such as bodies or character traits, that are ascribed to persons by “common sense.” This way of enabling the agent to be engaged or at work in her action may seem a bit grandiose, by comparison with the sorts of strategies that voluntarism, naturalism, and Kant feel that they have available to them. None of these three well-known approaches takes the liberty of questioning the reality of the finite as such; in that sense, they all work within the framework of common sense. Neither, on the other hand, do they seem to *accomplish* what Hegel’s approach accomplishes: to enable the

11 An important parallel to this dissolution (by Hegel) of the conflict between reason and inclination might be seen in Plato’s account, in Diotima’s speech in the *Symposium*, of the ascent of desire or eros from individual bodies to the Form of the Good.

agent to be at work in her action in a way that doesn't conflict, as naturalism seems to, with widely shared views about which actions we are responsible for and which we aren't, and that, unlike Kant, posits only one (systematically unified) reality, rather than two.

5.8. From the Concept ("Subjectivity") to Objectivity

At the end of Hegel's discussion of "singularity," a surprising turning takes place, one that is reminiscent of the turning in which determining reflection was said to have "gotten outside itself . . . lost in the negation" (WL 6:34/GW 11:257,4–6/407; see 4.8), and the turning in which true infinity as being-for-self "collapsed into the undifferentiatedness which is immediacy or being" (WL 5: 182/GW 21:151–152/163; see 3.24). Hegel tells us that singularity is "not only the Concept's return into itself but also, immediately, its *loss*" (WL 6:299/GW 12:51,6/621; emphasis added). The "abstraction" that he has just been describing as the "*wrong way*, [which] strays from the path of the Concept and forsakes the truth" (WL 6:296–297/GW 12:49,30–32/619), he now says is nevertheless "the *soul* of singularity" (WL 6:299/GW 12:51/621). This is because abstraction "determines the Concept according to its ideal moment of *being* as something *immediate*. Thus, the singular is a qualitative One or [a] This" (ibid.). That is, if we focus on the aspect of the Concept that is articulated in the Logic's chapter on Quality or in its account of Reflection – which, like all the other intervening parts of the Logic, are "ideal moments" of the Concept, insofar as the Concept supersedes them – then the proper way to describe that aspect is by means of the merely classificatory concepts ("Ones" and what they "have in common," or "Thises" and their "essential relation" to one another) that Hegel categorizes as "abstraction." Since the Concept hasn't yet developed its own way of thinking of determinacy, these are the available ways of thinking of it; but the result of doing so is that the Concept is "lost," since these forms of determinacy don't exhibit the unity with the universal that the Concept requires (WL 6:300–301/GW 12:51–52/621–622). To this extent, "abstraction," including the kind of sheer multiplicity that was postulated by "atomism" (on which, see 3.25–3.26), constitutes the *actual practice* of "singularity," and in that sense, its "soul."

What is needed, then, is to trace the reestablishment of the Concept's "totality," out of this self-loss. Hegel begins this process, which is completed in the Idea, with his account of *Urteil* ("Judgment," or literally:

“original division”) and *Schluss* (“Syllogism”). He makes it clear that he doesn’t mean these terms primarily to describe mental operations. Rather, he means them primarily to describe structures of reality. (I will capitalize them, like “Concept,” as a reminder of this special meaning.) In Judgment, two “independent totalities” – the “subject” and “predicate” of the traditional “judgment” – are divided from one another and then united. Hegel considers ways of doing this that are characteristic of being (the Judgment of determinate being), of essence (Judgments of reflection and of necessity), and of the Concept itself. In the most developed form of Judgment that he considers, the apodictic Judgment, subject and predicate are united by way of an intervening specification: “The house *constituted in such and such a way* is good” (WL 6: 349/GW 12:87,31/661). This intervening specification makes the Judgment self-contained in the sense that it gives a reason for it, so that one needn’t look outside it for its justification. Having this intervening specification, however, converts Judgment into the new category of “Syllogism,” in which starting point and ending point are connected by way of an intervening term, the “middle term,” that justifies moving from the one to the other. Having such an intervening term, Syllogism is the “restoration of the Concept in the Judgment,” in that “the Concept determinations are like the extremes of the Judgment, but at the same time their determinate *unity* is posited” (WL 6:351/GW 12:90/664), through the middle term.

“Everything that is rational,” Hegel says, “is a Syllogism” (WL 6:256/GW 12:90,18/664), because everything that is rational embodies its own reasons, or justifies itself. Here, of course, what “rational” describes is not a sequence of argument, as such, but the sort of structure of reality that’s addressed by the faculty of “reason” that’s associated with the Concept (as addressing the issue of what is being, what is reality, or what is ‘one,’ as I explained in 5.3 and 5.5). Such a structure has to embody its own reasons or justify itself in order to qualify as a “totality,” in which the universal and the determinate (particular, singular) refer to each other. They refer to each other by embodying the sort of mediation-by-reasons that is epitomized in the Syllogism.

However, even the Syllogism does not fully achieve this result, because in it there is still a *difference* between what mediates between the extremes, and the extremes themselves (WL 6:400/GW 12:125,9/703,top). Such an unresolved difference is no different, at bottom, from the “loss” of the Concept – the unexplained gap between universal and particular – with which the whole discussion of Judgment

and Syllogism began. It is an absence of “totality.” Hegel’s analysis of types of Syllogism, however (paralleling his analysis of types of Judgment), culminates in a Syllogism – the “disjunctive Syllogism” – in which what mediates between the extremes is identical with them:

A is either B or C or D.

But A is B.

Therefore A is neither C nor D.

Here, A’s universality (“either B or C or D”) is mediated with its singularity (“neither C nor D”) by *A itself* – the “middle term” is A – so that the mediator is identical with the mediated.

5.9. From Objectivity to the “Idea”

This result, which Hegel describes as “no longer a Syllogism” (WL 6:399/ GW 12:124,23/702), creates, he says, “*objectivity*,” which is “a being that is . . . the Concept that has produced itself out of, and in, its otherness [:] a *matter* [*Sache*] that is *in and for itself*” (WL 6:401/ GW 12:126,17–21/704). Judgment and Syllogism were articulations of the Concept’s otherness, insofar as they were the Concept’s “loss” of itself (WL 6:299/ GW 12:51,6/621; see 5.8, beginning). But through the development of Judgment and Syllogism, “objectivity” has overcome the “abstraction” through which that loss occurred, and has regained the Concept’s totality (though as yet without any internal articulation). As for the “*matter* [*Sache*] that is *in and for itself*”: “matter” (*Sache*) was introduced, in the Doctrine of Essence, as the “absolutely unconditioned” (WL 6:119/ GW 11:319/474–475), which went over into “existence.” The “in-and-for-itself” (see 4.6) was the epitome of being, its starting point and upshot combined. So a *Sache* (“matter”) that is in and for itself epitomizes being, as such, and is absolutely unconditioned existence. In sum, it is self-contained: It has no internal division of the sort that subjectivity suffered from (in the gap between universality and determinateness, subject and predicate, or mediator and mediated). Like being, determinate being, existence, actuality, substantiality, and abstract universality, objectivity is a kind of “immediacy”; this kind, however, is “the immediacy to which the Concept determines itself by superseding its abstractness and mediation” (WL 6:406/ GW 12:130, 5–7/708).

Hegel immediately likens this transition to self-contained “objectivity” to the transition, in St. Anselm’s “ontological argument,” to the existence of God. The ontological argument proceeds from the concept

of God to the existence of God; similarly, the transition to objectivity proceeds from the Concept to the Concept's "immediacy," as an absolutely unconditioned, and self-sufficient, existence. Remembering the theological attributes that Hegel assigned to the Concept itself – its freedom, love, and blessedness (5.2) – we may wonder why "objectivity" is celebrated as the arrival of God himself (as it were). Did the Concept not "exist"? Like everything else in the Logic, the Concept supersedes and thus includes being, and like everything subsequent to the second section of Essence, it supersedes and includes existence. But it needs a kind of immediacy that, unlike mere existence, is appropriate to itself, and this it finds in objectivity. The new wrinkle, in "objectivity," is the combination of unconditioned existence and *self-sufficiency* ("in-and-for-itself"-ness). The Concept needed to *determine* itself, and in that way it was not self-sufficient (because not fully "in itself"). Objectivity, on the other hand, is fully determinate, and in that way it is self-sufficient. In proceeding from the Concept to objectivity, we have proceeded (in effect) from a conception of God as needing to objectivize himself in determinate beings, to a conception of God as self-sufficient and free of all need. It is not difficult to see how the latter conception corresponds to an important thread in traditional thinking about God, and thus how arriving at it can suggest a parallel to the ontological argument for "God's" existence, even though earlier phases of Hegel's discussion also have strong theological connotations, and later phases – in particular, Absolute Spirit – will be described by him as representing the most adequate conception of God.

In spite of its self-sufficiency, objectivity too develops, from "mechanism" through "chemism" to "teleology." It does so because the Concept needs to produce not only self-sufficiency but also "the free being-for-self of its subjectivity" (WL 6:408/GW 12:131,5/710). The Concept has to produce this "free being-for-self of its subjectivity" in order to be truly "(in and) *for itself*." Though Hegel never makes it completely explicit (probably because he thinks it's obvious), this connection is crucial, because his entire discussion of "objectivity" hinges on it. The formula of "in and for itself," which Hegel identified (as "being-in-and-for-self") with Essence in his introduction to the Doctrine of Essence (WL 6:14/GW 11:242,24–25/ 390), is meant, as I explained in 4.6, to sum up the upshot of the Doctrine of Being, by combining what was true in being-in-itself (namely, indifference to all determination), with what was true in being-for-self, or the project of *self*-determination that was embodied in negativity and true infinity. The formula recurs as part of

the introduction of the Concept, where Hegel says that “being-in-and-for-itself has found . . . in the Concept a determinate being [*Dasein*] that is in keeping with itself and true” (WL 6:270/GW 12:29,17–18/596). So the Concept, as the unity of being and essence, is the determinate being that is in keeping with being-in-and-for-self. This means that it has to be in keeping both with being-in-itself and with being-for-itself. But Objectivity, so far, does not have the character of being-for-self; it does not exhibit self-determination. So Hegel will examine the content of Mechanism, Chemism, and Teleology for its potential to constitute this self-determination. In doing so, he will not be examining mechanism and chemistry and technology (“external teleology”), as we might find them laid out in textbooks of the physical sciences and engineering, to see whether their manifest content *requires us* to interpret them in terms of inner teleology or free self-determination. Rather, he will be looking to see whether we *can* interpret them in those ways, since it’s only if they can be interpreted in those ways that they can constitute the domain of Objectivity *as he has defined it* and arrived at it, namely, as a “matter [*Sache*] that is in *and for* itself” (WL 6:401/GW 12:126, 17–21/704).

So Hegel sketches ways in which the mechanical interaction of material objects in, for example, solar systems, and the chemical interaction of substances, can be increasingly *centered* or *systematically integrated*, so that that the behavior of items within these systems can be understood by reference to the center or to the system as a whole, rather than solely in terms of “thrust and pressure” (WL 6:423/GW 12:143,33/722). To the Newtonian account of orbital motion, which ascribes no special importance to the “center,” as such, Hegel objects that its notion of infinite motion in a straight line, in the absence of resistance, is “an empty abstraction,” because the power of resistance is derived only from “unity with the center” (WL 6:423–424/GW 12:143,11–19/722). But he acknowledges at the same time that this “unity . . . remains only an *ought*, because the externality of the objects, which is still also posited, does not correspond to that unity” (WL 6:423/GW 12:143,3–6/722). How does this “ought” enter into the physical world? It enters in insofar as the unity of the central body and the objects is “their *Concept*, which is in *and for* itself” (WL 6:423/GW 12:143,4/722; emphasis added). That is, it enters in insofar as we have good reason, deriving from the arguments for true infinity and for the Concept (as the latest form of true infinity), to look for centeredness in the world as an elementary form of being in and (especially) *for* itself.

Hegel describes Mechanism in general as a “contradiction” between, on the one hand, “the objects’ perfect indifference towards each other,” and on the other hand “the identity of their determination” (WL 6:413/GW 12:136,22–25/714). They are indifferent to each other in that there is supposedly no logical connection between them, but they are “identical in their determination” because “a principle of *self*-determination is nowhere to be found” in them (WL 6:412/GW 12:135,34/713; emphasis added), so that there is nothing to distinguish those that are determining from those that are determined. But that there *should be* self-determination, and distinctions based upon it, is not a feature of “mechanism” as it’s normally understood. It is only a feature of Mechanism as an interpretation of the Objectivity that is “a matter that is in *and for* itself,” and so must be self-determining. So, like his critiques of “external reflection” and of “diversity,” in Essence, Hegel’s critique of Mechanism depends upon the result – in the form of “being in and for itself” – of his initial critique of Being.

“Chemism” differs from Mechanism in that in the former, the object is not indifferent to its determination; instead, for “chemistic” objects (which include meteorological and sexual phenomena, and partners in love and friendship, as well as what we think of as chemicals), their determination and thus their relation to others enter very much into their nature (WL 6:429/GW 12:148–149/727). However, even in Chemism, the object still has an aspect of immediate self-standingness and externality (WL 6:434/GW 12:152,11–12/731), which prevents it from being fully “for itself” or self-determining. Mechanism and Chemism are only “finite, conditioned” processes (EL §202A). An “end” (*Zweck*; that is, *telos*, “end” in the sense of “purpose”), on the other hand, “is the Concept that has entered into free existence and is-*for-itself*, by means of the negation of immediate objectivity” (EL §204). It is “for itself” in the sense that what it pursues is not dictated by something other than itself, and it negates immediate objectivity by using it as its means. By entering “*free* existence,” it partakes of the freedom that is the Concept.

Why should we regard an “end,” in this sense, as *itself* something objective? Hegel praises Aristotle for identifying life as “inner teleology,” and praises Kant for resuscitating this idea, in his *Critique of Judgment* (WL 6:440/GW 12:157/737; EL §204R), but in line with his praise of Aristotle, Hegel criticizes Kant for treating this teleology as a mere “subjective maxim,” which one can use on a “proper occasion” but which one should not regard as objectively required (WL 6:442–3/GW 12:158,18–23/738–9, referring to KU Ak. 387). The end relation, Hegel says,

is not . . . a “reflective” judging that considers external objects according to a unity only “as if” an intelligence had given this unity “for the convenience of our cognitive faculty”; on the contrary, it is the truth which is-in-and-for-itself and which judges [*urteilt*: divides] *objectively* and determines external objectivity absolutely. [It is thus] the syllogism of the self-subsistent free Concept, which closes [*zusammenschliesst*] itself with itself through objectivity.

(WL 6: 444/GW 12:159,21–30/739)

This is, essentially, the conclusion of “Objectivity”: that the truth that is in-and-for-itself – which Hegel will call the “Idea” – divides (*ur-teilt*) itself into the Concept and objectivity, so that the two are “built to go together,” and the presence of inner teleology in objects manifests this connection.

What is the *argument* for this conclusion? Here again, I have to agree with Charles Taylor that Hegel is “sure of [this] ascending transition because he is already sure of it” (*Hegel*, p. 294), finding in the physical world traces of what he thinks he is bound to find there; and I have to add, once again, that I think he is *justified* in doing so by his argument, in the Doctrine of Being, for true infinity. Since objects, merely as such, are finite, and since finitude, according to the argument for true infinity, is unreal, objects possess reality through their transcending themselves into something infinite or “for-itself,” which at this stage of the discussion is the Concept. So whatever traces of such self-transcendence Hegel can find in the objective world, he can legitimately take (assuming they are consistent with one another) to be real. The “end relation” is such a trace, insofar as it is a process in which finite things serve a purpose that transcends their finitude. That higher purpose being to achieve “reality” or (equivalently) to manifest the Concept.

5.10. The “Idea,” Reason, and Actuality

Hegel chose the word “Idea” as his title for “the absolute unity of Concept and objectivity” (EL §213) because *Kant* had “reclaimed the expression ‘Idea’ for concepts of reason” (WL 6:462/GW 12:173,11/755). In doing this, Kant was intentionally following *Plato*, for whom, Kant says, “ideas are archetypes of the things themselves, and not, in the manner of the categories, merely keys to possible experience” (*Critique of Pure Reason* A313/B370). So Kant reserved the term “Idea” for concepts of God, freedom, the world as a whole, and the soul, which go beyond possible

experience and the categories, and consequently (Kant thinks) can appropriately be used only in connection with practical, moral thinking – in the domain of moral “faith,” as Kant puts it (*Critique of Pure Reason* B xxx) – and not in connection with theory or knowledge.

Hegel, however, thinks that he has shown, through the arguments that we have been analyzing, that in order merely to have theoretical knowledge of finite, natural qualities and things, one must ultimately think of them as transcending themselves via true infinity, the free Concept, and the Concept's objectification in things like the “end.” Thus, one will not be able to distinguish between a realm of theory, in which one knows only “appearances,” and a realm of practice, in which one thinks in terms of God, freedom, and so on. Rather, one will think in terms of *a single reality structured by the Concept, a reality of which existence and action, fact and value, mechanism and teleology, are all genuine aspects, none of which can be segregated into a domain of “theory” or a domain of “practice,” a domain of “knowledge” or a domain of “faith.”* Again in honor of Plato, and also in honor of Aristotle (whose “form” is the same Greek word, *eidos*, as Plato's “Idea” or “Form”), Hegel proposes to call this ultimate reality the “Idea.” But Hegel follows Aristotle *rather than* Plato (at least as Aristotle interpreted Plato) on the question of whether this ultimate reality could subsist without being objectified. For in Hegel's version, it is necessarily objectified, as we saw in the previous section (5.9).

Naturally, this piece of terminology, the “Idea,” has a lot to do with Hegel's description of his philosophy as a kind of “idealism” (compare 3.16). In view of the misunderstandings to which Hegel's “idealism” has been subject, it would have been helpful if he could have called the Idea “form,” in honor of Aristotle *in particular*, with whom he shares the notion that concepts are necessarily embodied. Then his philosophy could have been called “formism,” and we could have scratched our heads over what *that* could possibly mean, but at least we wouldn't have confused it with the subjective idealism of Bishop Berkeley. However, since Hegel translated both Plato's *eidos* (which we translate as “Idea” or “Form”) and Aristotle's *eidos* (which we translate as “form”) by the same German word, “*Idee*,” he had no convenient way of signaling his Aristotelian preference by his choice of terminology. Understanding this linguistic situation makes it easier to forgive Hegel for the cognitive dissonance that we experience in trying to think of his “Idea” as something that is, as he insists, fully embodied and objective, as well as fully conceptual and subjective.

Aristotle's doctrine that concepts are necessarily embodied, that “form” is necessarily “enmattered,” is almost as fundamental, for Hegel,

as his own doctrines that finitude is unreal and that infinity is as the self-transcendence of the finite. Indeed, they may be at bottom the *same* doctrine for him, if, as I suggested in the previous section, his deepest reason for believing that the Concept must be “objective” (which is his way of stating Aristotle’s doctrine that concepts are necessarily embodied) is that the infinite must be the self-transcendence of the finite.¹²

Reasonably enough – assuming that one grants him his “Idea” – Hegel associates it both with *truth*, in the strongest sense of that word, which I introduced in 5.5 (the “unity of the Concept and objectivity” that, as he says in EL §213, makes a “true soldier” or a “true work of art” “true”), and with *reason*. He identifies it with reason almost as a matter of definition – the Idea, he says, “is the true, philosophical meaning of reason” (EL §214). Because the Idea is self-sufficient and in-and-for-itself, Concept and Object, and thus fully self-explanatory or self-justifying, it leaves no room for reasons that would be outside it, and so it is fully rational. Here, then, we can finally see why Hegel felt justified in making his famous statements, in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, that the actual is rational and the rational is actual (which I discussed previously in 4.15). If actuality can only properly be understood in terms of the Concept, and if that Concept, for the reasons that I have just given, necessarily embodies itself in something that one can appropriately call “rational,” then the actual, clearly, must be rational, and the rational likewise (via that same embodiment) must be actual.

The Idea’s relation to reason no doubt explains its relation to “truth,” as well, since insofar as something embodies reasons, it appears to be *truer* (to what it essentially is/should be) than something that is less rational, more arbitrary. We can interpret this ontological kind of “truth,” on which Hegel lays great emphasis in contrast to the “truth” of factual

12 For Aristotle’s general doctrine of form and matter, see *Physics* Books I and II. (Aristotle seems to make one very controversial exception to his rule that form must be enmattered, in *De Anima* III 5 [the “productive intellect”].) Hegel’s critique of the form/matter and form/content distinctions, and his account of “actuality,” in the Doctrine of Essence, don’t yield all that he values in Aristotle, since he takes Aristotle’s account of the soul to be the most important account of “spirit” (and thus, in effect, of the Concept) prior to his own (EG §378). On Hegel’s way of appropriating Aristotle, see Alfredo Ferrarín’s rich treatment, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Michael Wolff, *Das Körper-Seele-Problem. Kommentar zu Hegel, Enzyklopädie (1830) §389* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1992); and Willem A. de Vries, *Hegel’s Theory of Mental Activity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988). Unfortunately, these writers don’t analyze Hegel’s Doctrine of Being in any detail, and consequently they don’t construct the connection between Hegel’s conception of true infinity and his appropriation of Aristotle that I suggest here.

statements, as the latest incarnation of the “reality” that I have suggested he has been pursuing since the beginning of “Determinate Being” (see 3.4, 3.16). Here again, Hegel is saying, in effect, that what has the greatest claim to “reality,” or to what he now calls “truth,” or (as we could say) to true being, is something that is both (1) objective and (2) fully determined by reasons (the Concept). Actuality was a first approximation to this “truth” – hence the weight that Hegel is prepared to lay on it in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* – but its rationality is fully articulated and manifest only via the Concept, in the Idea.

5.11. Can Metaphysics, Like This, Be Rationally Defended?

Is the sort of metaphysics that Hegel is now engaging in, with the “end relation” and the Idea, defensible in our supposedly “post-metaphysical” age? I hope that my detailed reconstruction of his argument, in this chapter and the two previous ones, has discouraged readers from assuming that nothing “metaphysical” can be rationally defensible. Does Hegel’s metaphysics transgress limits for which Kant, the great drawer of the line against indefensible metaphysics, has given good arguments?

If the essence of Kantian “Critical” thinking is the doctrine that knowledge, as such, must involve sense-experience (together, of course, with the Categories), then Hegel’s metaphysics might as well be called “pre-Critical,” or “intentionally anti-Critical.” For Hegel is clearly claiming knowledge that does not, in any direct way, involve sense-experience. If, on the other hand, the essence of “Critical” thinking is that it does not accept any concept or doctrine – including the *Kantian* doctrine that I just mentioned – as an unexamined “given,” but instead subjects it to “the test of free and public examination” (*Critique of Pure Reason* A xii, note), then Hegel’s train of thought, as I have described it in this chapter and the previous one, seems to be thoroughly Critical. To proscribe it simply because it is also “metaphysical” would, clearly, be dogmatic.¹³ The way to determine whether this particular form of metaphysics is rationally defensible must be to examine the arguments

13 In his extended early critique of Kant in *Faith and Knowledge* (1802) (TWA 2: 287–433/FK 53–191), Hegel repeatedly measured Kant against the standard of the Idea, as Hegel conceived of it, and found Kant wanting – without, for his part, giving more than a gnomic defense of this Idea. As Paul Guyer points out in his “Thought and Being: Hegel’s Critique of Kant’s Theoretical Philosophy,” in F. Beiser, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 171–210, this seems like a dogmatic procedure, on Hegel’s part. In light of the *Science of Logic* (1812), however – which seems, by spelling out an undogmatic argument for the Idea, to fulfil

by which Hegel arrives at it, rather than to apply to it a standard of rational acceptability that Hegel, himself, gives reasons for questioning. Those reasons being, once again, Hegel's argument for the contradictoriness of finitude: If finite being doesn't have its quality by virtue of itself, and consequently it is more real to the extent that it transcends itself, then the understanding of reality cannot be based primarily on finite evidence such as sensations (though it must certainly take account of them).¹⁴ Reason will have to use other means – like those that I have laid out in the previous two chapters and the present one – to track the true reality that transcends finitude. The reality that reason identifies will be found, very much, *in* sensations, insofar as this reality is the *self-transcendence* of the finite, rather than a “power existing outside it” (WL 5: 160/GW 21:133,39/145–146). But those sensations, as such, will not *establish* its reality, since when they are taken as sensations they are merely finite.

5.12. The Idea, the “Cunning” of Reason, and “God”

In his discussion of the end relation, Hegel speaks both of “violence” and of the “cunning of reason” (WL 6:452/GW 12:165–166/746) – a phrase that he famously uses in his *Philosophy of History* lectures – as ways in which the “end” gets its way. It is easy to interpret this sort of language, if one wishes to, in the light of the singleness of “*the* Concept,” as Hegel habitually speaks of it, and to imagine a solitary grey-bearded World-Spirit imposing his will, by some kind of remote control, upon finite things. Hegel invites this sort of interpretation when he says, in the lecture cited in EL §209A, that:

Divine Providence behaves with absolute cunning. God lets men, who have their particular passions and interests, do as they please, and what results is the accomplishment of his intentions, which are something other than those whom he employs were directly concerned about.

Hegel warns us elsewhere, though, in highly visible passages, that religious “representations” (*Vorstellungen*) such as he is using in this quotation don't translate directly into philosophical terminology (EL §§1,2). That is, we can't assume that because in religious talk, “God” is described

the implicit “promissory notes” that Hegel issues in *Faith and Knowledge* – his earlier apparent dogmatism is perhaps excusable.

¹⁴ Hegel develops this argument about knowledge at length in PhG, Chapters 1–5.

as an individual who has intentions, therefore the Concept or the Idea or Absolute Spirit is an individual, and has intentions. "The singularity of the Concept," Hegel says, is "strictly what is effective, . . . what produces itself" – no talk of "intentions," so far, here – and this "singularity," Hegel adds, "is *not* to be taken in the sense of merely *immediate* singularity – as when we speak of single things, or human beings, and so on; that determination of singularity is found only in connection with Judgment" (*Urteil*, "division") (EL §163R; emphasis added). "The standpoint of Judgment is finitude" (EL §168), Hegel says, whereas the Concept itself is "infinite, creative form" (EL §160A). So we shouldn't think of the Concept as an individual thing, over against other individual things. This is, of course, something that is already clear from Hegel's doctrine that true infinity (the ancestor of the Concept), rather than being something (an individual thing) with an identity like those of finite things but differing from them in that it is infinite, *is only* through finite things' self-transcendence (WL 5:160/GW 21:133,39–2/145–146). Depending on finite things in that way (as they, for their part, depend upon it for their full reality), true infinity cannot be thought of as distinct from finite things in the way that they are distinct from each other. This being the case, it is clear that we can't take Hegel's religious talk about God and God's intentions as implying that "he" ("God") exists over against finite things and has intentions for them in the way that we exist over against, and have intentions for, the things that we control. When he speaks of the "cunning of reason," Hegel undoubtedly does intend to tell us that people whose passions and interests are not aligned with the transcendence that can be achieved by rational freedom, will accomplish things that they don't intend. Aspects of their actions will pay unintended tribute to the freedom that they aren't intentionally pursuing. But from this important fact it does not follow, nor can Hegel (consistently with his doctrine of true infinity) assert, that there is a divine mind or person, separate from finite things, that directs what they accomplish.¹⁵ Which, as I suggested in 3.17, does not prevent it from

15 When Hegel discusses divine personhood, in his account of the Trinity, he counts "nature" as the "Son" – the "other I" of God the Father – in which the Father eventually "returns to unity with himself" as the Holy Spirit (*Geist*) (EG §381A, p. 22/12). In this way, Trinitarian "personhood" serves to *unite* God with finite nature, including humans, rather than to contrast God, as one person, with other (human) persons. And at the same time, the distinction between the first two divine "persons" serves to distinguish Hegel's doctrine from pantheism, which is the traditional alternative to orthodox theism's way of relating God to finite nature.

being the case that Hegel is perfectly serious, and indeed is justified, in his claim that his philosophy captures something that is true in traditional theistic religion that is not adequately captured by the familiar varieties of atheist humanism, so that rather than being a smokescreen, his use of religious language is a legitimate way of expressing what he takes to be a genuine and important truth. We just need to interpret that use in the light of his Logical analysis.

5.13. The Idea as Life

The Idea in its “immediate” form, Hegel says, is “life.” Life is Idea because it combines “soul” with body or objectivity (EL §216). Since by “soul” Hegel means, as in Aristotle’s biological concept of “soul” (*psuche*), the form whose presence in the creature makes it alive, and which Hegel identifies with the Concept, the combination of soul with body is a combination of Concept with objectivity, and thus it is the Idea. Hegel makes it clear at the end of EL §216 that by speaking of “soul,” here, he does *not* intend – any more than Aristotle did – to suggest that there is a constituent part in any living thing that can exist separately from its body.¹⁶ “Soul,” like other kinds of Aristotelian “form,” exists, in general, only in matter.

I don’t think Hegel means to imply, here, that it makes no sense at all to locate the Concept in non-living things. His accounts of Mechanism, Chemism, and the “end” found a Conceptual aspect in each of them (5.9). What he does mean to imply is that living things embody the Concept much more directly than non-living things do. The kind of centeredness and integration that they exhibit is much more developed and explicit than those that Hegel identified in Mechanism, Chemism, and teleology, as such. But it is clearly no accident that life follows immediately after teleology in Hegel’s account, just as it does in the unfolding of Aristotle’s physics and biology. Here we should remember what I said about the “reality” of finite things, in connection with true infinity: Finitude is not real in the way that infinity is real. But finitude is a necessary aspect of the reality of the infinite (see 3.9). Likewise, Mechanism, Chemism and teleology aren’t Conceptual in the way that life is Conceptual; but they are necessary aspects of life’s Conceptuality, traces of which can consequently be found in them as well.

16 “It is only insofar as [the living thing] is dead that these two sides of the Idea are diverse *components*” (EL §216).

Hegel analyzes the functioning of living things first internally, and then externally. Internally, they exhibit "sensibility," "irritability," and "reproduction" (WL 6: 478–480/GW 12:185–186/768–769; EL §218A). "Sensibility" is the capacity to experience impressions (from whatever source, internal or external to the organism); "irritability" is the capacity to *respond* to such impressions, in a variety of possible ways; and "reproduction" is the capacity, not to produce offspring, but to "*reproduce*" *what one presently is*: to maintain oneself in existence. Reproduction, Hegel says, is the "truth" of the first two (WL 6:479/GW 12:186,7/769), because, I take it, it is in relation to the project of maintaining oneself in existence that one's impressions acquire meaning, and that one's response to those impressions has a point. "Each of the singular moments," he says, "is essentially the totality of all of them" (ibid.), as in the pure Concept (5.1): They each embody, implicitly, both of the others. Hegel identifies sensibility as the moment of universality, irritability as the moment of particularity, and reproduction as the moment of singularity. The living thing exists, as such, insofar as it combines a sensitivity to itself and its surroundings with a response to itself and its surroundings in a way that reflects and (re-) produces its ongoing self.¹⁷

Insofar as the living thing "reproduces" (maintains) itself, and thus gives itself form, its physical interaction with the world around it becomes an issue. To have a goal of self-maintenance is to have needs, drives, and feelings, including (sometimes) pain, and to use force against, and to appropriate, the world around one.¹⁸ Hegel's heading for this category of functioning is "assimilation" (WL 6:483/GW 12:189,14/772; cf. EN §§352, 357ff.).

5.14. The "Genus": Universality and "Identity with the Other"

The meaning of "reproduction" or self-maintenance is not as obvious as we may have been conditioned to regard it, however. What makes a later stage a stage *of the same* "*self*," or the same living thing, as a prior

17 An analysis that is very similar to Hegel's, here, can be seen in Diotima's speech, in Plato's *Symposium*, when she discusses the organism's physical self-reproduction (self-maintenance) and its reproduction (preservation) of its "manners, customs, opinions, desires," etc. (207d–208b).

18 WL 6:481–483/GW 12:187–189/769–772. Hegel tacitly takes animal life as exhibiting the features of life as such more fully than plant life does. This whole analysis is presented in much greater detail in EN.

stage? Indeed, what is it that the parts or organs of a living thing share, at a given time, that makes them parts or organs of one and the same living thing? Hegel's name for the answer to this question – whatever exactly it may be – is “universality”:

[The] transformation [of what is mechanical and chemical] into living individuality constitutes the return of this individuality into itself, so that production – which as such would be a passing over into something other – becomes reproduction, in which the living thing posits itself for itself as *identical with itself*. . . . In this going-together of the individual with its objectivity, which at first was posited in advance as indifferent to it, the individual, which on one side has constituted itself as an actual singularity, has equally *superseded its particularity* and raised itself to *universality*.

(WL 6:483–484/GW 12:189,25–2/772; emphasis added)

Production is reproduction only insofar as what it produces is “identical with itself.” The individual's involvement with mechanical and chemical objectivity makes it “actual,” but it also raises the question of what unifies all of this objectivity into an individual, and thus the question of “universality.” In place of the living individual and the objectivity with which it interacts, we have, then, a “real, *universal* life,” which Hegel calls “*Genus*” (*Gattung*) (WL 6:484/GW 12:189,5–6/772). His point is that if there is a standard by which we identify sameness or identity in a living thing across space and time – or by imposing which, the living thing *makes* itself the same or identical (“reproduces” itself) – that standard isn't on the same logical level as the components of the living thing.¹⁹ It is superior to them in the way that “universality” is superior to “particularity.” This universality within life, he calls “genus,” by which he refers not only to the familiar sort of “genus” to which “species” are subordinate, but to biological groupings in general, including species in particular. To belong to one of these groupings is to have the standard of one's sameness or identity across space and time, and thus what constitutes one's “reproduction,” specified by a sort of authority, to which one is subordinate – and by which one's *selfhood* is achieved, since it's only through a functioning “universality” that a being can be itself. “Genus” membership is not the *only* kind of universality through which a living being can achieve selfhood – Hegel will soon be talking

19 In referring to space and time, here, I'm speaking loosely, since the *Logic* doesn't deal with space and time as such. More accurately, I should describe the universality as making the same living thing out of whatever multiplicity of (“mechanical” and “chemical”) ingredients it is composed of.

about other kinds (under the heading of "Cognition"). Genus membership is simply the first and simplest way in which a living being can achieve (some degree of) selfhood.

The other important feature of genus membership, which Hegel turns to immediately, is that it creates a relationship between the individual and other members of the same genus. Hegel refers to this result, figuratively, as a "doubling" of the individual (WL 6:484/GW 12:190,24/773). Since it understands itself as an individual only through its membership in a "genus," its individuality directly *involves it with* other members of the genus, as well:

Though the individual is indeed *in itself* genus, it is not for itself the genus; what is *for* it is as yet only *another living individual*; the Concept that is distinguished from itself has for object, with which it is identical, not itself as Concept but a Concept that as a living being has at the same time external objectivity for it, a form that is therefore immediately *reciprocal* [*gegenseitig*].

(WL 6:485/GW 12:190,7–13/773; emphasis added)

That is, its membership in the genus takes, initially, the form of a relationship with other members of the genus. This situation, in which "the identity of individual self-feeling," which is achieved through membership in the genus, "is *in* what is at the same time *another* self-standing individual," Hegel describes as a "*contradiction*" (WL 6:485/GW 12:190, 35–1/773; emphasis added). This seems, on the face of it, to be a reasonable description; it is also consistent with the account of Hegelian "contradiction" that I gave in 4.12, where I said that "contradiction" results from the unstable coexistence of two threads, one composed of negativity and its successors (true infinity, positing reflection, identity, the Concept, and so forth), and the other composed of being and its successors (determinate being, external reflection, diversity, mechanism, and so forth). What we have here is a living thing that seeks to be individuated by embodying "universality," of some sort (as in negativity, true infinity, and the Concept), but which finds this "universality" *present to it*, initially, only in the form of other living things of its kind – that is, in the form of external, diverse particulars. This is indeed a characteristic problem, given the materials that Hegel's Logic has identified as being available for us to work with.

Besides saying that "the identity of individual self-feeling is *in* what is at the same time *another* self-standing individual," another way in which Hegel describes the dependence of the first individual's individuality

on another individual is as its “*identity with the other individual*,” which he equates to “the individual’s universality” (WL 6:485/GW 12:190,14/773; emphasis added). The locution, “identity with the other . . .,” will occur in other important contexts later, as well. To understand it, we must remember that “identity,” as Hegel analyzed it in *Essence*, was converted into “difference” and “diversity,” which were then replaced by Opposition and Contradiction. So “identity,” as Hegel understands it, is not incompatible with numerical diversity. Neither, however, is *diversity* the last word; rather, the most fundamental way of understanding diversity is as “contradiction” (which resolves itself into an underlying “ground”). That is why it is not surprising that Hegel speaks of “identity,” here, in close association with “contradiction.” The two (diverse) individuals that he is speaking of are “identical” in the sense that the “individual self-feeling” of each depends upon (is “in”) the other; but this dependence involves or reduces to a “contradiction,” whose resolution will take us beyond both the “identity” and the “diversity” that the initial situation seemed to exhibit.

5.15. The “Death” of the Living Individual

The solution – the resolution or underlying “ground” of the contradiction – that Hegel describes the living thing as finding is very striking. To “realize itself as something universal” (WL 6:485/GW 12:190,16–17/773), the individual joins together with the other individual to “propagate the living species,” since through offspring the separateness of the initial pair is, in a sense, overcome. This solution is unsatisfactory, however, because it merely repeats the problem in the next generation (or between the generations), creating the familiar “infinite progression.” But “copulation” (*Begattung*) nevertheless contains the gist of a more successful solution, insofar as it implies the “death” of the “immediacy of living individuality,” and that death, Hegel says, is the genesis of “Spirit,” and in particular, of “Cognition” (*Erkenntnis*) (WL 6:486–487/GW 12:190–191/773–774), which is the next phase of the Idea.

Before we examine this next phase, however, it would be useful to know just how copulation implies “death”! Quoted in full, Hegel’s statement is that “in copulation, the *immediacy* of the living individuality perishes; the death of this life is the emergence of spirit” (*ibid.*; emphasis added). The death of the living individual’s “immediacy” follows, I suggest, from the realization (1) that the individual depends on others

for its individuality; (2) that its solution to this problem – the production of offspring (which unite it with others) – simply makes it dependent on still more others; and finally (3) that as a result of this solution, the first individual must *itself* be seen as the product of copulation, so that in all these respects, it is not immediately given. To achieve individuality through membership in a genus is clearly not to have it immediately. Why does Hegel describe this non-immediacy, so dramatically, as “the death of this life” (ibid.)? He describes it in this way because it removes any need for the individual to live forever. Being replaced by its offspring, and itself being the offspring of others, it is part of an ongoing process, the “genus,” that makes the individual’s immortality entirely dispensable.

The fact that one belongs to a particular genus, that one is not one’s own parent, and that one may have offspring, have utterly fundamental consequences for living things, including, obviously, ourselves. When Hegel says that “the living thing dies because it is the contradiction of being in itself the universal, the genus, and yet existing only as a singular being” (EL §221A), he means that because of the special significance that our relations with other particular members of our genus necessarily have for us, *it would make no sense for us to live forever*. Virginia Woolf’s novel, *Orlando*, directs our attention to this point by imagining a life that goes on for century after century, entering continually into new relationships with new particular humans. It ceases to look like a human life, or a life in which the living being that lives it could be “the same person,” and thus herself, and thus free. Hegel is not saying that biology, as such, is destiny, but rather that finitude, and the specific relationships that go with it, are destiny, because (in my continuing refrain) true infinity *is* only as the self-transcendence of the finite, so that what doesn’t have a finite life, plays no role in true infinity.²⁰

That is why, though Hegel often chooses to use “hard” language for his remarks about finitude and about the living being’s relation to its Genus (in which, he says, it “goes under” [EL §221]), the underlying

20 By contrast, then, with Charles Taylor’s view that true infinity is “an infinite life embodied in a circle of finite beings, each of which is *inadequate to it* and therefore goes under, but is replaced in necessary order by another” (*Hegel*, p. 240; emphasis added), Hegel seems to be saying that life can be infinite only through finite beings, so their only “inadequacy” is to *themselves*, not to it. The “contradiction of being in itself the universal, the genus, and yet existing only as a singular being” (EL §221A) is not a contradiction between the singular being and something other than it; it is a contradiction within the singular being.

thought is not hard, but simply truthful. Because true infinity *is* only as the self-transcendence of the finite, *to be free, to be oneself, is to be finite, and dreams of a temporally infinite life ignore what life, as such, is about* – which is, among other things, relationships to a finite number of particular other living beings of one's own genus, and (through them) to "the Genus" as a whole, and, through this Genus, to the Concept and the Idea, or "God." By making this point about freedom as finitude, Hegel anticipates all the pathos with which existentialism and humanism focus on the inherent finitude of human existence – while at the same time pointing, through his conception of this finitude as *transcending itself* through freedom, Life, the Genus, and so forth, to something that *redeems* this finitude: to a truth of traditional theology or spirituality that (at least) the more pessimistic forms of existentialism and humanism do not appreciate. (Instead, one might think that they draw a good deal of their drama from the mistaken suggestion that in the absence of individual immortality, there can be no transcendence whatever.) This other, redeeming transcendence is what Hegel's philosophy of "Spirit" will be about.

Important parallels to Hegel's thoughts about the relation between the individual living being and its genus can be found in Plato's remarks about how reproduction "is what mortals have in place of immortality" (*Symposium* 206E), and in Aristotle's statement that "the most natural of all functions for a living thing . . . is to produce another thing of the same sort as itself . . . in order to share as far as it can in the everlasting and divine" (*De Anima* 415a27). Like Hegel, Plato and Aristotle then go on – Plato in the pages of the *Symposium* immediately following, and Aristotle in his discussions of intellectual functioning and friendship, later in *De Anima* and in the *Nicomachean Ethics* – to describe additional, higher ways (including, in Plato's case, a sort of spiritual reproduction) in which humans, in particular, can *participate in* immortality or divinity. In none of these three thinkers is there a "regret" that the finite being cannot be immortal. Aristotle's theory of individuality and its fulfilment in "happiness" (*eudaimonia*), which is the full performance of the individual's "task" or "function" (*ergon*), leaves no room for yearning for temporal prolongation, as such. Plato obviously is interested, in the *Phaedo*, in the possibility of the soul's being immortal, but it seems clear from the *Symposium* and the *Republic* that he does not regard the immortality of the individual soul as necessary for human fulfilment (see 2.3, paragraph 4). In the *Phaedo* itself, none of Socrates's actual arguments, as distinct from his charming fantasies of reincarnation and

the afterlife, seem to entail the eternal existence of a soul that is distinct, in important ways, from other eternally existing souls; so that it seems at least open to question as to whether the conception of immortality that Plato is exploring there is really the immortality of an individual soul, in the way that immortality was later conceived in conventional Christian theology.

The true significance of the conventional conception of personal immortality, Hegel implies, is in its implication that the individual human being can and must go beyond her finite limitations – a claim with which Hegel fully agrees, both in what he says about Life and in his subsequent remarks on “Cognition.” As for the conventional *interpretation* of the conventional conception, Hegel was careful not to directly reject it, which professionally would probably have been a suicidal thing for him to do.²¹ But the unstated implication of Hegel's critique of spurious infinity – or one that *is* stated in connection with Kant's postulate of immortality, but not in connection with the traditional Christian doctrine of the immortality of the individual soul – is that focussing on a quantitative issue such as the duration of the soul's existence, and what may happen to it at various times in the future, distracts from the presence of true infinity in the present, which (in Hegel's view) is what religious experience and a relationship to God are truly about. Within the Christian tradition, it is especially Christian *mysticism* that shares this view of Hegel's, and makes it clear that one can value the Christian Bible highly, as a source (when properly interpreted) of both ethical and metaphysical truths, without necessarily believing in individual immortality. Hegel's affinity for Christian mysticism is evident in his enthusiasm about such writers as Meister Eckhart and Jakob Böhme.²²

21 See T. Pinkard, *Hegel. A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 577, and W. Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion. The Foundations of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 365–367. Ludwig Feuerbach lost all chance of an academic position when he publically attacked the idea of the immortality of the soul (see Karl Ameriks, “Feuerbach, Marx, and Kierkegaard,” in K. Ameriks, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], pp. 260–261).

22 See 3.18. Hegel is reported to have said, about Eckhart: “There, indeed, we have what we want!” G. Nicolin, *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1970), p. 261. Cyril O'Regan writes that “Hegel relates positively to such mystics as Boehme and Eckhart only to the degree to which he ignores, or better, systematically represses, the apophatic [‘negative’ – R. Wallace] vocabulary and the suggested limits of cognition” (*The Heterodox Hegel* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1994], p. 382); but it could be suggested that the parallel to “negative theology” in Hegel is his critique of the finite and of the pretensions of the “understanding.” We certainly do not and cannot know God

For living things as such, freedom – going beyond their finitude – is an option only in the very limited sense that they can contribute to the reproduction of their genus. Limited though this option may seem, Hegel says that through it “the Idea of life has freed itself not just from some one or other (particular) immediate This, but from this initial immediacy in general. Thereby the Idea of Life comes to itself, or to its *truth*, and therefore it enters into existence for its own self as *free genus*. The death of the merely immediate singular organism is the *emergence of Spirit*” (EL §222).

Hegel’s thought is simply that insofar as a being relates to itself as *in any way* “going beyond” itself, it has (in principle) an entirely different relation to itself and its world, from the immediate relations of self-forming, need, and assimilation that characterized life as such. The “death of the merely immediate singular organism” – which is to say, *its recognition that it comes from and can contribute to something larger than itself* – changes everything. Here, Hegel’s response to atomism or egoism – the challenge that he doesn’t mention explicitly here, but to which I said in 3.23 that we could interpret the Logic as a whole as his systematic response – has finally begun to take concrete shape. Hegel is arguing, as I explained in the previous section (5.14), that living individuals must function as members of a single genus, and (now) that in doing so, they recognize and concern themselves with a reality beyond themselves, be that reality only their biological origin and their capacity to procreate. This reality beyond the living being, with which it is unavoidably involved, is not, Hegel has been arguing, a set of mere contingent facts. Rather, it is essential to these beings that they are alive, and that they are therefore products of and capable of procreation. These facts aren’t optional; they have been, as Hegel says, “deduced,” and deduced from the nature of the Concept and freedom themselves. So freedom, for these beings, cannot be mere arbitrary choice, but must take into account the fundamental nature of their relationship to the genus and its

in the way that we know finite things; in that sense, God is indeed unknowable. When Pseudo-Dionysius writes that “in knowing nothing, [man] knows in a way that surpasses understanding” (*The Essential Mystics*, Andrew Harvey, ed. [Edison, NJ: Castle, 1998], p. 188), Hegel certainly doesn’t disagree. And when Hegel says that the inadequacies of the finite, as such, lead the mind to the infinite, Pseudo-Dionysius certainly doesn’t disagree. If, on the other hand, “negative” theology rejects any kind of understanding whatever – that of “reason” as well as that of “the understanding” – then it seems to run afoul of Hegel’s critique of spurious infinity, which says that if something is defined purely as what it is *not* (as in, “by his nature, this God is *not* understandable in any way”), it will be rendered *finite* by that definition, and thus surely less than divine.

other members. This basic anti-egoist line of thought will be developed throughout Hegel's philosophy of spirit and his ethical and political theory.²³

It is also worth noting how the significance that Hegel ascribes to "death" differs from the significance that is ascribed to it, in modern existentialism, by (for example) Martin Heidegger. In *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger sees "being-towards-death" as, in effect, the defining feature of human existence. Hegel similarly sees death as of fundamental importance for humans (and all living things), but by connecting it to the individual's relationship to the "genus" – to the fact that the individual can be a parent, and has parents, and thus is necessarily part of something greater than herself – and to the transcendence of mere individuality that is implied in these facts and is generalized, subsequently, in "Cognition" (all of which constitutes the "redeeming transcendence" that I referred to earlier), Hegel deprives death of the absoluteness that Heidegger ascribes to it. The individual, as such, of course meets her end, in death. But what she comes from and contributes to, does not. It is worth asking whether the implications of this simple fact – that death, or finitude, can be (in effect) the *birth* of something higher – are sufficiently appreciated by existentialism.

5.16. The Idea as "Cognition," or Spirit

In the Logic, Hegel's general term for the new relationship between subject and object that is made possible by living beings' "going beyond" themselves is "Cognition" (*Erkennen*). (Hegel uses "Spirit" [*Geist*], here, almost interchangeably with "Cognition," though technically he should reserve "spirit" for the category that he develops later, in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, which subsumes space and time, or nature, as well as the multiplicity of the "Genus" and the functioning of "Cognition.") Initially, Cognition breaks down into two forms: cognition proper, which is the pursuit of knowledge of a reality that is not oneself, and "willing" (*das Wollen*), which is the pursuit of the good. Cognition proper aims to overcome the one-sidedness of the Idea's *subjectivity* (by taking up the objective world into it), while willing aims to overcome the one-sidedness of the Idea's *objectivity* (by aligning it with subjectivity's inner standards) (EL §225). Both of these activities, Hegel is saying, are ways

23 As, indeed, a similar anti-atomist line of thought is developed in Plato's and Aristotle's theories of the soul, and their ethical and political theories. See note 17.

of implementing the living being's new-found relation to something beyond itself. It can seek to know what that thing beyond itself objectively is, and it can also seek to transform that thing so as to align it with its inner standard of how things ought to be. Insofar as the being engages in either or both of these activities, it engages in Cognition, and can be referred to (in a shorthand way) as "Spirit."

If you are thinking that this kind of dualism of subject versus object and knowledge versus value does not seem in keeping with Hegel's initial conception of the Idea as reason and actuality, which I described as a single reality, structured by the Concept, which cannot be segregated into a domain of "theory" and a domain of "practice," a domain of "knowledge" and a domain of "faith," and so on (see 5.10), you are absolutely right. Hegel is laying out this dualism not as a feature of the Idea as such, in its final incarnation – which he will call the "*absolute* Idea" – but only as exhibiting, in its initial form, a crucial *feature* of the Idea as such, which is its dimension of transcendence, of going beyond finitude.

Living beings, as such – in their self-shaping, need, and assimilation – operate in a finite manner. When they relate to their genus, and thus go beyond themselves, they exhibit a kind of transcendence. Spirit or Cognition exhibits that transcendence in a purer form, as the search for knowledge and as the promotion of the good. When, as Hegel describes in EL §232, the search for knowledge arrives at the idea of *necessity* (as it did at the end of the Doctrine of Essence [see 4.12–4.14]), and figures out what that necessity is fundamentally about, it discovers a connection between objectivity and subjectivity that wasn't what it expected to find (4.14–5.1). (Here we must understand the search for knowledge as including, implicitly, the entire investigation that is embodied in the *Science of Logic*, up to the beginning of the Doctrine of the Concept.) This discovery begins to undermine the object/subject, knowledge/value divide, from the side of the object and knowledge (EL §232).

A corresponding undermining also occurs from the side of the subject and value (the promotion of the good). Initially, the good seems to be present in the objective world only incompletely, as an "infinite progress" (EL §234). However, "the *activity* [*Tätigkeit*] supersedes the subjectivity of the end [*Zweck, telos*], and with it the objectivity, the antithesis that makes both finite" (ibid.; emphasis added). What is this "activity," and how does it have this effect? When Hegel first introduced the term "activity," as part of his discussion of necessity and the *Sache*, the "matter in question," in the Doctrine of Essence, it stood

for “the movement of translating the conditions into the matter in question . . . to give existence to the matter in question by superseding the existence that the conditions have” (EL §148). That is, activity is the emergence of what really matters, from the mere circumstances. So what Hegel is saying in §234 is that insofar as the good is in fact *being promoted*, in the objective world, that world is not just in need of being made good, by the subject's standards – it *is*, objectively, good. The “end” is present, is functioning, in objectivity. As he said in a lecture:

Unsatisfied striving vanishes when we recognize that the final purpose [Endzweck] of the world is just as much accomplished as it is eternally accomplishing itself.

(EL §234A)

The presence of the activity that seeks to make the world good is what constitutes the world's already accomplished goodness. And since, if the argument of the Logic is sound, this is not just a subjective opinion but a piece of *knowledge*, the antithesis of object and subject or knowledge and value is thereby superseded.

5.17. The Absolute Idea as a Refutation of Egoism

This result – that “the objective world is in this way in and for itself the Idea, positing itself eternally as *end* and at the same time bringing forth its [own] actuality through activity” (EL §235) – Hegel calls (as I said) “the *absolute* Idea.” Life was the Idea existing in itself; Cognition was the Idea existing for itself; the absolute Idea is absolute because it is the Idea existing in and for itself (EL §236A). Because it achieves an immediacy (the “in itself”-ness) that the contradictory finitudes of Cognition lacked, the absolute Idea is in one way a return to the initial form of the Idea, to Life. But since it contains, as superseded within itself, the transcending activity (the “for itself”-ness) of the Spirit – that is, of both forms of Cognition – it is also something deeper. In the absolute Idea, Hegel says in the culminating substantive claim of his Logic,

the Concept is not merely *soul*, but free subjective Concept that is for itself and therefore possesses *personality* – the practical, objective Concept determined in and for itself which, as person, is impenetrable atomic subjectivity, but which, nonetheless, is not exclusive singularity, but is for itself *universality* and *cognition*, and has in its other *its own* objectivity for its object.

(WL 6: 549/GW 12:236,4–11/824)

If the Concept were merely “soul,” it would confer life on everything that it informs (see 5.13, first paragraph). But it isn’t merely soul; it also “doubles” or multiplies itself into particular living beings sharing a genus. But these beings don’t merely go about their business, “impenetrable and atomic,” indifferent to each other. Rather, they transcend themselves through their relationship to their genus (5.14), and some of them (those that are capable of “spirit”) understand that they have more reality or being through this self-transcendence, and pursue it consciously and systematically: They are “for themselves universality and cognition.” Hegel then repeats his characteristic, apparently paradoxical claim that the existence of the being that transcends itself in this way is “not exclusive,” but instead it has, in its “other,” *its own* objectivity.” Just as he said, in connection with the Genus, that in it we have “identity with the other individual, the individual’s universality” (WL 6:485/GW 12:190,14/773; see 5.14).

How are we to understand this “identity with the other individual”? When he first introduced “identity,” Hegel described it as “the equality with itself that produces itself to unity” (WL 6:39/GW 11:260,14/411–412). That is to say, identity is a function of “negativity”: of the self-restoring selfhood that survived the critiques of quantity and measure, and consequently is the topic of the Doctrine of Essence. In Hegel’s account of the “Reflection-Determinations,” “difference” and “diversity” emerged *from* identity, rather than being opposed to it. That is, they were ways of *implementing* self-restoring selfhood. The same pattern then recurs in the Doctrine of the Concept: As “identity” (see 5.1), the Concept needs to differentiate or specify itself, and it does so in the form of Objectivity – of Mechanism’s “diverse” objects. When the Concept – so as to be “in and *for* itself” (see 5.9, third paragraph) – is *united with* Objectivity, in the Idea (initially in the form of Life), the Concept’s “identity” returns, as “self-determining identity” (WL 6:461/GW 12:171,32/754), superseding Mechanism’s diversity. It does this initially in the form of the “Genus.” The living individual achieves its individuality only through its relation to others (the Genus) because it needs something higher than itself, in order to have a standard of what would constitute “reproduction” (preservation) of itself, and it finds this higher standard in its biological identity, as a member of a particular genus, and thus also in its relationship to other members of this genus. It is “identical” with these others, insofar as its self-individuation depends upon its orienting itself toward what it has in common with them, and thus toward its own finitude – its “death” – and the way in which it can go beyond that finitude through relations with these

others (through birth and procreation). In "cognition," life then practices going-beyond-itself in its most general form, as the pursuit both of knowledge and of the good, and indeed of the inseparable combination of the two that is knowledge that the pursuit of the good is objectively real. In that knowledge, "the subject's *singularity*, with which it was burdened by its presupposition [that the good is a merely subjective end and limited in its content], *disappears* along with that presupposition" (WL 6:548/GW 12:235/823; emphasis added). That is, when the subject discovers that its going-beyond-itself, in the pursuit of knowledge and of the good, is not its own "merely subjective" and "limited" commitment, but rather is the "inner ground and actual subsistence" of the objective world – in the way that Hegel has demonstrated in the foregoing book – it discovers its "free, *universal* identity with itself" (all quotes *ibid.*; emphasis added), which is its identity, through the Concept, with the entire objective project of knowing and pursuing the good.

"*Exclusive singularity*," the alternative that Hegel's culminating claim in the block quote says no longer applies, is precisely egoism. "Exclusion" (thereafter called "repulsion") was the process by which the "one" related to other ones, after the moments of being-for-self had "collapsed into undifferentiatedness" (WL 5:182–183/GW 21:150–151, 27/163; see 3.21); and these "ones," together with the "void," were the principles of atomism, which was the initial representative, in the Logic, of egoism. What Hegel has done in the "Reflection-Determinations," "Singularity," and the "Idea" is to derive an alternative conception of individuality to replace the one that is embodied in atomism. In this alternative conception, the "free, subjective Concept... as person, *is* impenetrable atomic subjectivity" (this is the partial truth of egoism, preserved within the alternative conception as "diversity," Mechanism, and the "doubling" of Life) – but at the same time it is *not* "exclusive singularity, but is for itself *universality* and *cognition*, and has in its other *its own* objectivity for its object" (all of this is from the block quote): that is, through its Genus-membership (which as we saw is essential to its individuality), it is universal, and insofar as it grasps the point of this universality, through Cognition (both theoretical and practical), it is *aware of* its universality as its *identity with* its other – that is, with other "impenetrable atomic subjectivities," or persons. And this identity of the person with other persons presumably has the same sort of consequences that the identity of the living individual with its other had: that the person cannot orient herself purely to her "atomic" (egoistic)

concerns, but must recognize the significance of other persons, with whom (as Hegel has shown) she is “identical.” This is Hegel’s answer, in the *Logic*, to egoism – an answer that he will expand upon, in his *Philosophy of Spirit*, with his famous account of mutual recognition.²⁴

What Hegel’s development of the Concept into the absolute Idea has done, then, is to show how the “free *love*” that characterized the Concept (which “bears itself toward what is different from it as toward its own self” [WL 6:277/GW 12:35.3–5/603; see 5.2]) is a feature not only of the “universal,” or of divinity, as such, but also of the finite, living and cognizing things whose self-supersession (when they achieve reality) *constitutes* that universal or that divinity. Should the defenders of egoism (such as Hobbes and Gauthier, whom we discussed in Chapter 2) concede that Hegel has shown that an agent who is aware of what her full reality requires – namely, her “identity” with other persons – must logically be concerned, not only about herself and her needs and desires, but also about other persons and their needs and desires?

That persons, as such, are “identical” with one another, is a dramatic claim, which could hardly run more against the grain of social atomism or rational choice theory. Hegel’s argument for this claim is his argument, first, that sheer quantity is not determinate in itself, but must resort to “measure,” which in turn is not determinate in itself, but depends on an “inner specifying unity,” which is indistinguishable from “negativity” itself; second, that the “diversity” that this negativity becomes is ultimately the manifestation of an underlying substantial identity; and third, that when this substantial identity’s manifestation is understood as “Concept,” and specified as Mechanism’s diverse objects, the identicalness of this Concept is in fact regained through the increasing degrees of universality (or “in-and-for-itself”-ness) of Chemism, teleology, the Genus-relationship, and Cognition. Underlying the entire argument, then, is the generative “negativity” that survived the collapse of true infinity; and the crucial premise is that if anything is *real* (that is, self-sufficiently determinate), it is by virtue of this negativity, so that

24 Michael Inwood, *Hegel* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 310, and Willem A. deVries, *Hegel’s Theory of Mental Activity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 104–106, discuss the question of how Hegel thinks that the pure thoughts that constitute the absolute Idea relate to the pure thoughts that constitute an individual ‘I.’ Hegel’s account of the “doubling” of the individual, and its “identity with the other individual,” in Life, and of its having “in its other *its own* objectivity for its object,” in the absolute Idea, is his explicit answer to Inwood’s and deVries’s question.

Mechanism's diverse objects have their reality only through their relationship to the Concept (the in-and-for-itselfness that reasserts itself through Chemism, teleology, the Genus-relationship, and Cognition), and that relationship makes them "identical" with each other.

The most obvious feature of this argument for a defender of egoism to object to is precisely this crucial premise – that if anything is *real*, it is by virtue of this "negativity" that survived the collapse of true infinity. But as I said earlier (4.7), the "ego's" preoccupation with its *own* self-preservation, or its satisfaction of its *own* desires, as its defining concern – that is, egoism's claim to be a *normative* science, a doctrine of "*rational choice*," and not just a descriptive science – already involves going beyond mere inertia or mere response to impulse, as such, toward an orientation to selfhood – to what is one's *own*; so that it is hard to see how egoism can consistently reject Hegelian "negativity," which is simply each quality's attempt to "be itself" (to be what it is by virtue of itself, rather than by virtue of relations to others).

And it's also hard to see how egoism can reject the other thought lying behind Hegel's premise, which is that reality should ultimately be self-sufficient, so that if negativity yields self-sufficiency, it is also the key to reality. That this argument makes negativity into, in effect, "*God*" (see 3.17), insofar as everything that is real and diverse and objective flows from it and is subject to its loving authority (see 5.2), will be a compelling *objection* only for someone for whom the rejection of all "theology" is more important than the defense of and analysis of rationality, selfhood, and reality's self-sufficiency. This God or negativity, once again, being the self-transcendence of the finite or of the diverse or objective or "doubled," is not something that is *alien to* the finite or diverse or objective or doubled, so that it could use the latter (as Charles Taylor says) as its "vehicle"; rather, it is the accomplished "*reality*" of the finite or diverse or objective or doubled. That Mechanism's diverse "objects," and so on, are subordinate to this negativity and ultimately subsumed within the "in-and-for-itself" "identity" of the later version of negativity that Hegel calls the Absolute Idea simply follows from the priority of the "*reality*" that this negativity delivers.

Hegel's argument differs from *Kant's* argument for the same conclusion – that true rationality or autonomy requires respect for one's fellow rational agents – in that Hegel shows (as I explained in Chapter 3) that the selfhood or "negativity" on which the argument turns is not a "postulate" that needs to be taken seriously only by those who have Kantian

“practical faith,” and which as such is opposed to the facts that we can know about the phenomenal world; instead, it is a necessary feature of any world that is real in the sense that it is self-sufficient (that it is what it is by virtue of itself). That is, Hegel’s argument differs from Kant’s by virtue of the *connection*, in the form of negativity or true infinity, that Hegel argues for (and thus shows that we can *know*) between the finite and the infinite, inclinations and selfhood, the world and “God,” and “theory” and “practice,” a connection that makes the diversity, objectivity, or “doubling” of agents a necessary feature of itself, and which thus creates the “*identity*” between agents that Kant, in effect, seeks (as the “Kingdom of Ends”), but which, as I argued in 2.7, Kant cannot *justify*, because he lacks such a connection between the finite and the infinite, and so on.

If Hegel’s argument succeeds in refuting egoism, and if, as I argued, Kant’s argument does not, then we have good reason to take seriously Hegel’s claim, which I discussed in 5.6, that Kant’s principle of autonomy is “empty,” in comparison to Hegel’s.

As far as egoism is concerned: Even if its defenders were to grant Hegel’s argument up to this point, they would still have one recourse, which is to point out that the agents whom Hegel is considering so far are not separated from each other in *space and time*, but only by diversity, objectivity, and the “duplication” of the living individual; so that Hegel hasn’t yet addressed the *full* “salt sundering sea” that separates agents such as ourselves from each other. Hegel knows this, of course, and intends to address this full separateness in his *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Spirit*. It’s also true that the concrete practical implications of taking other persons into account, and not functioning as a mere “atom,” remain entirely to be spelled out. This issue, too, will be addressed in detail in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, and in the expanded version of “Objective Spirit” that is the *Philosophy of Right*.

5.18. “Method” as Being and as Result: The Circle Closes

In the final section of the *Logic*, Hegel sums up the Absolute Idea as “the Idea that thinks itself” (EL § 236; cf. WL 6:550/GW 12:237,38–4/825) – by analogy with Aristotle’s divine “thought [that] thinks itself” (*Metaphysics* xii, 7, 1072b20) – because its reality has been accomplished through the transcendence represented by theoretical and practical *Cognition* (that is, thought), which have now reached the

stage of thinking *themselves* as a unity. The content and the form of this thought are so indistinguishable that they can be called, simply, "method," though because of the reality that it accomplishes and is, this is a "speculative method," rather than just a cognitive one (EL §238; cf. WL 6:550–551/GW 12:237–238, 26–9/825–826). That is, it is a "method" that has existential as well as cognitive consequences – that brings itself (that is, full reality) into existence, by studying itself. *Methodos* (Greek) = "journey after," so "method" is not inherently limited to cognitive pursuit; it could just as well designate, as it does here, a pursuit, by inadequate "realities," of full reality.

This "method" takes the forms of "beginning," "advance [*Fortgang*] and development," and "end." Here is a précis of the EL's description of these. The "*beginning*" is, of course, being, or the immediate. Seen from the point of view of the speculative Idea, however, this being is the Idea's self-determination (its self-specification as particulars). As such, rather than being "immediate," it is "negation, positedness, mediatedness . . . , and positedness in advance" (EL §238). But since this mediatedness (since it is Idea) is the mediatedness of the Concept, it is the Concept *in itself*, as yet undetermined, and thus it is "universal" (ibid.). "*Advance*" is the positing of the division into universal and particular that thus emerges, so that the Concept's immediacy and universality are overtly demoted to a mere moment (of the Concept or the Idea) (EL §239). In the "*end*," however, this "*different*" (the "advance") is posited as what it is in the Concept. As the negative of the "first" (the beginning) *and* as *identity* with it, it is its own negativity, and thus it is the unity in which these two (the beginning and the advance) are superseded and preserved. When the Concept "closes" itself with itself in this way, it is the realized Concept or the Idea, for which this "end" is only the disappearance of "the 'shine' that the beginning was *immediate* and the Idea is a *result*" (EL §242). The beginning is immediate, and the end is a "result," only as long as they are different from each other; but the Concept is identical with itself, even in its otherness (see 5.1, final paragraph); so when the different is posited as what it is in the Concept, then the immediate and the result, being and the Idea, are seen as identical. The "circle" of logical science is closed:

Thus logic . . . has returned, in the absolute Idea, to this one-fold unity that is its beginning; the pure immediacy of being, in which at first every determination appears to be extinguished or removed by abstraction, is the Idea that through mediation – in the form of the superseding of

mediation – has reached equality with itself. Method is the pure Concept that now relates only to itself; it is therefore the one-fold relation to itself that is *being*. But now it is also *fulfilled* being, the Concept that comprehends itself, being as the *concrete* and likewise simply [*schlechthin*] *intensive* totality.

(WL 6:572/GW 12:252,31–1/842; emphasis added)

NATURE, FREEDOM, ETHICS, AND GOD: THE *PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE* AND *PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRIT*

6.1. From Logic to Nature to Spirit

The Logic, as such, concludes with the Idea's comprehending its own self-comprehension, and thus ceasing to be a mere "content and object," for itself, and becoming instead "science," which knows itself (WL 6:572/GW 12:253,13/843). As such, however, it is still "enclosed within [*eingeschlossen in*] pure thought" or "subjectivity" (WL 6:572/GW 12:253,15–19/843). But

when the Idea posits itself as the absolute *unity* of the pure Concept and its reality, and thus contracts itself into the immediacy of *Being*, it is *totality* in this form: *Nature*.

(WL 6:573/GW 12:253,24–27/843)

This positing or contraction, Hegel explains, is not a process of "becoming" or "transition," like the one that produced "Objectivity" (which anticipated many features of what we might think of as "nature," such as mechanism, "chemism," and so forth). The pure Idea is already "absolute *liberation*," so that it contains "no immediate determination that isn't already posited and Concept"; consequently, no "transition" can occur in it (WL 6:573/GW 12:253,27–32/843). So the right way to describe what goes on here, Hegel says, is to say that "the Idea *freely releases* itself, in absolute self-assurance and resting in itself" (WL 6:573/GW 12:253,38–39/843). In order to be equally free, the form of the result is the "absolute *externality of space and time*, existing for itself without subjectivity" (WL 6:573/GW 12:253,2–4/843).

What kind of "freedom" is this, we might ask, by which something that is absolutely "external" and lacks all subjectivity comes into being? In his final sentence, Hegel refers to it as the "initial *decision* [*Entschluss*]

of the pure Idea, to determine itself as external Idea" (ibid.; emphasis added; compare EL §244), which might suggest a certain arbitrariness. However, *Entschluss*, which literally means "unclosing," is in fact simply the opposite of "enclosed," *eingeschlossen* ("within pure thought"), by which Hegel described the Idea's state before it releases itself in externality. So we needn't be misled by the usual translation of *Entschluss* as "decision." In fact, Hegel thinks that this "free" event is inescapable, and is already, in effect, accomplished when the Logic returns to its beginning in "the pure immediacy of being" (WL 6:572/GW 12:252,32/842). In EL §244, he describes the Idea as releasing from itself "the *immediate* Idea, *itself* as Nature" (emphasis altered). To say that there is no "transition," no *Übergang*, between the Idea and Nature, is to say that Nature *is* the Idea. But by being "unclosed," no longer "within" thought, this Idea is also "the negative of itself" or "external to itself" (EN §247). Nature is simply the "unclosed" Idea, the Idea that is ("immediately") being, rather than being enclosed within thought.

What's *free* about the "release" or "unclosing" from thought is that the pure Idea itself is already "absolute *liberation*," completely "posited and Concept," and that, consequently, when it is "unclosed" from thought, its determinacy continues to be completely posited and Concept, and thus it is just as much "with itself," just as free, in this "other" that's outside thought, as it was when the other was inside thought (see WL 6:573/GW 12:253,37/843). What's free about the *result* – the "absolute *externality of space and time*, existing for itself without subjectivity" – is, Hegel says, that insofar as it is "in the Idea," it "remains in and for itself the totality of the Concept":

Insofar as this externality presents itself only in the abstract immediacy of being and is apprehended from the standpoint of consciousness, it exists as mere Objectivity and external Life; but *in the Idea it remains in and for itself the totality of the Concept*, and science in the relationship of divine cognition to Nature. But in this decision [*Entschluss*] of the pure Idea to determine itself as external Idea, it thereby only posits for itself the *mediation*, out of which the Concept ascends as a free existence that has gone into itself from externality, that completes its self-liberation in the *science of Spirit*, and that finds the highest Concept of itself in the science of Logic as the self-comprehending pure Concept.

(WL 6:573/GW 12:253,4–15/843–844; emphasis added)

If we view the externality of space and time "in the abstract immediacy of being and . . . from the standpoint of consciousness," it is *merely* external;

but as the Idea, it remains the totality of the Concept, and therefore free. As we will see in the rest of this chapter, the second and third parts of Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* – that is, his *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Spirit* – describe how, out of Nature, the Concept “ascends as a free existence that has gone into itself from externality, [and] completes its self-liberation in the science of Spirit.”

Since Nature is the “unclosed” Idea or the Idea that is “external to itself” (EN §247), it is *the Idea*; so it is not a *falling away from* the Idea (as the “ideal”), still less is it *opposed to* the Idea. It isn't an exile from the Idea, or something anti-divine. If it were any of those things, it could hardly be expected to accomplish a “*self-liberation* in the science of Spirit.” If, as I suggested in my discussion of true infinity in Chapter 3, Nature for Hegel relates to Spirit as the finite relates to the infinite, then Nature itself will need to embody the project of “reality” or selfhood that is fulfilled in Spirit. Seen merely “from the standpoint of consciousness” (see the last block quote), it doesn't embody that project; seen, however, as the Idea – which it is – it does embody that project.¹

6.2. Subjectivity within Nature

In its broad outline, Hegel's account of Nature recapitulates his accounts of Objectivity and of Life, in the Logic's Doctrine of the Concept – only now in the domain of “externality” (EN §247), which initially takes the form of space and time. As “being alongside one another” (*Außereinander*), externality is initially “Mechanics,” including space, time, place, motion, matter, gravity, impact, and so on. These clearly expand upon the “Mechanism” that we got to know in Objectivity. As “particularity,” which is given the title of “Physics” (following Aristotle,

¹ Hegel's former collaborator, F. W. J. Schelling, focussed on Hegel's conception of the “creation” of Nature (which I have been analyzing) in his critique of Hegel's system as a whole. Schelling argued that Hegel's “creation” was from an “idea” (namely, the “absolute Idea”), rather than from an actually existing God, as Christian and Biblical doctrine require (F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42*, ed. M. Frank [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993], p. 133; cited by Christian Iber, *Subjektivität, Vernunft und ihre Kritik* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999], p. 204). Schelling overlooks the fact that being, existence, and actuality are all features of (that is, superseded in) the absolute Idea. This is not altered by the fact that the Idea is “enclosed within pure thought” (WL 6:572/GW 12:253,15/843), since this “thought” is not an activity of anything other than the Idea. Klaus Brinkmann gives a detailed analysis of Schelling's critique of Hegel in “Schellings Hegel-Kritik,” in Klaus Hartmann, ed., *Die Ontologische Option* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1976), pp. 117–210.

for whom *physis* is the “nature *of*” specific kinds of thing), Nature takes the form of light, the four elements, specific gravity, cohesion, sound, temperature, form, electricity, and chemistry. These make up a greatly expanded version of “Chemism.” The final third of Nature, entitled “Organic Physics,” is geological, vegetable, and animal Life – corresponding, obviously, to “Life,” in the Logic. The relation between these three stages is that Mechanics exhibits no centering or subjectivity; Physics, on the other hand, exhibits a degree of organization that does involve centering or subjectivity, but still in a “hidden” form (EN §273A); while Organic Physics “shows it as real” (*ibid.*), in the form of organic organization. This centering or subjectivity is the Concept, which arrives at its “reality” in Organic Physics (EN §336A, TWA 9:336).

How is it that Nature exhibits the Concept at all? It does so, just as Objectivity did (see 5.9, third paragraph), because although it is “external,” it nevertheless *is the Idea*, and thus it “remains in and for itself the totality of the Concept,” as Hegel indicated in the final paragraph of WL, which I quoted above (second block quote, 6.1).

Nature is to be regarded as a *system of levels*, of which one emerges [*hervorgeht*] necessarily from the other and is the nearest truth of the one from which it results – which, however, does not mean that the one is *naturally* produced by the other, but rather [that it is produced] in the inner Idea, which makes up Nature’s Ground.

(EN §249)

Since the Nature that Hegel is discussing is not simply matter or electromagnetism distributed in space and time, but rather is the *Idea* (in externality to itself), the emergence that interests Hegel is not a sequence of development over time (through a process of “natural” production), but the non-temporal emergence of forms that are more in keeping with the Concept or the Idea – that is, the process by which Nature becomes explicitly what it is implicitly (namely, the Concept or the Idea). This is what Hegel traces from Mechanics through Physics to Organic Physics. The four elements, specific gravity, electricity, and chemistry all exhibit a degree of organization or centeredness – Conceptuality – that the push-and-pull of Mechanics does not; and living things exhibit still more of it.

Hegel’s treatment of Life, here, differs from his treatment of it in the Idea in that he adds an explicit treatment of vegetable life, and before that, of “geological life,” the organization of the Earth as a structure that is capable of life. This structure elevates itself into the “living organism”

“by virtue of the identity, existing in itself, of its Concept” (EN §342). As vegetable nature, the “subjectivity” that makes the organic into singular entities unfolds itself as “a body that is composed of parts that are different from one another” (EN §343). However, “the part – the bud, twig, etc. – is also the whole plant” (ibid.); that is, it isn’t functionally differentiated to the point where it can’t exist or propagate itself by itself. In animal life, on the other hand, “true organism” emerges, “in which the external formation agrees with the Concept in that the parts are essentially limbs [*Glieder*, members] and subjectivity exists as the penetrating *one* of the whole” (EN §349). The animal organism has greater unity than the vegetable:

Animal subjectivity consists in the animal’s preserving itself in its bodiliness [*Leiblichkeit*] and in being touched by an external world, and remaining with itself [*bei sich selbst*] as the universal. Thus the life of the animal, as this highest point of nature, is the absolute idealism that it has the determinateness of its bodiliness at the same time in itself, in a perfectly fluid way – that it incorporates and has incorporated this immediate thing [*dies Unmittelbare*] into the subjective.

(EN §350A, 9:430)

The animal is “the universal” in that it imposes a certain order and unity on all of its parts, limbs, or organs: Its bodily determinateness is determined by it, “in itself.” Since the animal, in this way, is not reducible to its bodily parts, but instead is the unifying order that is imposed on them, it exhibits the “idealistic” pattern that it subjects the “immediate” (the finite, the merely bodily) to the “subjective” (the infinite, the “soul” [ibid.]). That is why the animal’s “external formation agrees with the Concept” (EN §349).

How this unity surpasses that of plants becomes clearer when we read that “feeling” (Hegel uses *Gefühl* and *Empfindung* interchangeably here) is the animal’s distinguishing characteristic, from which its other distinctive features – voice, locomotion, animal warmth, and interrupted intussusception – follow (EN §351). This “feeling” is “the individuality that, while being determined, is universal to itself, remains simply with itself, and preserves itself” (ibid.); that is, it is a way of being determined by what is outside oneself, which doesn’t detract from one’s sense of oneself, but rather creates and enhances it.

In seeing and hearing I am simply with myself, and it [sc. the seeing and hearing] is only a form of my transparency and clarity in myself. Because it has itself as its object, this point-like and yet infinitely determinable thing,

which remains so unruffled in its simplicity, is the subject as self/self, as *self-feeling*. By having feeling, the animal has a *theoretical* attitude toward the other, whereas the plant is either indifferent or practical toward what is outside it. . . . Having feeling, the animal is *satisfied in itself, by being modified by something else*.

(EN §351A, 9:432; emphasis added)

This is how the animal in its subjectivity “preserve[s] itself . . . in being touched by an external world” (EN §350A, 9:430). This capacity sharply distinguishes the animal from the plant, which has no comparable “self-feeling” – no ability to have its selfhood enhanced by its being determined by what’s outside it – and consequently has nothing that exists, like the animal’s subjectivity, “as the penetrating *one* of the whole” (EN §349).

Hegel goes on to analyze animal functioning under three headings: Figure (*Gestalt*), Assimilation, and the Genus-Process. These correspond to Living Individual, Life-Process, and Genus, in the Idea (see 5.13). “Assimilation,” perhaps surprisingly, turns out to include “the theoretical process, sensibility” (EN §357), as well as drives, needs, instincts, and digestion; however, the Life-Process, in the Idea, also included a passing mention of “feeling” and “sensibility” (WL 6:481/GW 12:188,4–5/770). What we have just learned about animal “self-feeling” in seeing and hearing and so forth explains how “theory” as well as “practice” is a feature of animal functioning and selfhood.

As in the Idea, the living thing’s self-reproduction (through “assimilation”) leads, again, to the end of its “immediacy,” because reproduction requires a standard of what is the same thing, and because what is “produced” is clearly no longer simply given, as an immediate datum (EN §366). What the living thing thereby belongs to and depends upon will be called the “Genus.” And this Genus immediately involves division:

The Genus is in one-fold unity, which is-in-itself, with the singularity of the subject whose concrete substance it is. But the universal is *judgment* [*Urteil*, ‘original division’], so as to become, from this its overt diremption, a *unity that is for itself* – to posit itself, as *subjective* universality, into existence. . . . Because they have the universal which is not yet subjective, not yet *a* subject, as their basis, the moments of the Genus-process are separated and exist as a number of particular processes, which end in modes of the *death* of the living thing.

(EN §367; emphasis added)

The Genus “divides” so as to be a unity that is for itself: that is, so that the singular living thing can *pursue* its unity with the universal. It divides in several ways: into different species, into two sexes (and parents and children), and into different aspects of the individual. When the Genus divides itself into different species, each species becomes “for itself” by “negating” the others, a relationship that creates enmity and the possibility of violent death (§368). When the Genus divides itself into different sexes, it creates the possibility of an “*affirmative* relationship of singularity to itself,” in which “while one individual is opposed to another, the singularity continues itself in this other and feels itself in this other” – in mating (*Begattung*) (EN §369; emphasis added). But the individuals “have fulfilled their determination in the process of mating and thus, insofar as they have no higher determination, they head for death (*dem Tode zugehen*)” (EN §370). (Note well the qualification: “*insofar as they have no higher determination.*”) This is the mode of death that is appropriate to this second division, into sexes. After procreation, the individual’s life has no further biological *point*.

Finally, the singular living thing also divides *within itself*. Sometimes one of its individual systems or organs, excited by its conflict with something inorganic and external, “establishes itself for itself and persists in its particular activity against the activity of the whole”: This is illness (EN §371). But beyond this *transient* “inadequacy” of the individual to the type of functioning required by the Genus, there is also a

universal inadequacy . . . that the individual has, in that its Idea is the *immediate* one, that it stands as an animal *within nature*, and that its subjectivity is the Concept only *in itself*, but not *for itself*. Consequently the inner universality remains a *negative* power over against the natural singularity of the living thing, a power from which it experiences *violence* and perishes, because *its determinate being as such does not itself have this universality in itself*, and thus is not the reality corresponding to it. . . . [This] inadequacy to universality is [the animal’s] *original illness* and the inborn *seed of death*.

(EN §§374, 375; emphasis added)

Indeed, the individual “itself kills itself,” because in its effort to “build” its singularity “into” universality, it makes itself abstract, immediate, and a “*habit* that lacks process” (EN §375).

The living thing’s “inner universality remains a *negative* power” against its natural singularity “because its determinate being as such does not have this universality in itself, and thus is not the reality corresponding to it.” The living being has an inner universality, but that

universality is not *in its determinate being* (its *Dasein*), and so its determinate being is not the reality that would correspond to its inner universality. What reality *would* correspond to its inner universality? The reality, of course, of *Spirit*, of “the Concept . . . that has the reality corresponding to it, the *Concept*, as its determinate being” (EN §376; emphasis altered).

What this means is that Nature’s “inner universality” can’t find a reality that corresponds to it in mere living things, as such. That is why these things keep dying – through violent conflict with other species, or through the pointlessness of being something that has already reproduced itself, or by becoming a mere “habit that lacks process” – that lacks what we might call the “full presence” of universality. Conflict with other species may prolong the life of one’s own species; procreation does so insofar as it creates a new generation; and making one’s functioning as universal as possible (“building it into the universal”) may make it indefinitely reproducible. But none of these creates that full presence, and in that sense none of them constitutes a determinate being that corresponds to Nature’s “inner universality.” The indefinite prolongation that each of these three tactics achieves is, in each case, a spurious infinity, a “progress to infinity,” rather than the presence (the *Dasein*) that is true infinity.² It’s only when the *Concept*, rather than the living thing as such, is the determinate being – it’s only when Spirit (theoretical and practical: soul, consciousness, intellect, freedom, ethics, art, religion, and philosophy) comes on the scene – that Nature’s inner universality acquires a determinate being that corresponds to it.

Has Hegel proven that “nature” or “life” in the everyday senses of those words are “inadequate” without Spirit? Only if we understand his proof as including his argument from “reality” to true infinity. As Hegel mentioned at the end of the WL and as I explained at the end of 6.1, it is possible to view nature purely from the standpoint of “consciousness,” in which case it has no “inner universality,” but is simply external. But the Nature and the Life that Hegel has been analyzing in the EN aren’t

2 Michael Wolff interprets Hegel’s account of natural death, in EN §375, as deriving natural death directly from his description of the animal’s “form [*Gestalt*]-process,” in EN §356, in which Hegel says that the organism “makes its own members into its inorganic nature, feeds on itself” (Michael Wolff, *Das Körper-Seele-Problem. Kommentar zu Hegel, Enzyklopädie (1830)*, §389 [Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1992], p. 135). This interpretation doesn’t explain specifically what Hegel means by “habit that lacks process,” in §375; nor does it bring out the way in which all four forms of death seem to involve spurious infinities.

viewed merely from the standpoint of consciousness, but from that of the Idea (because in order to be “real,” in the sense defined in “Being,” Nature needs to embody the project of “reality” or selfhood that led us to true infinity, the Concept, and the Idea), and from that standpoint, Nature and Life have an inner universality, the “Concept,” that needs a corresponding reality, which only Spirit – in which the Concept is its own reality or object (EN §376, EG §381) – can provide.

6.3. Spirit

How can the Concept be its own reality or object? In EG §381, Hegel describes Spirit as “the Idea that has arrived at its being-for-self.” Being-for-self, we remember, was a being that “transcends otherness, its connection and community with other, has repelled them and made abstraction from them” (WL 5:175/GW 21:145,34–36/158). So the Idea that has arrived at its being-for-self is the Idea that has repelled or abstracted from Nature’s “otherness,” which is Nature’s being-outside-itself (EN §§247, 254). In this Idea, which is Spirit, the Concept is its own reality or object because it has repelled or abstracted from its being-outside-itself – from everything that is other than itself – so the only thing that remains that *can* be its reality or its object is itself.

Thus, the essence of Spirit, Hegel says, is freedom, “the Concept’s absolute negativity as identity with itself,” part of which is its ability to abstract from everything external, “even from its determinate being,” and to bear “the negation of its individual immediacy, to bear infinite *pain*” (EG §382). Hegel designates this ability as Spirit’s abstract “universality” (ibid.), and goes on to say that “as being-for-itself, [this] universal *particularizes* itself and is identical with itself in doing so” (EG §383). This pattern of abstracting, particularizing, and maintaining identity through the particularizing, is, of course, the same pattern of universal, particular, and singularity, or of being “with oneself in the other” (that is, in the particularity), that Hegel laid out in the Doctrine of the Concept and will hark back to again (as I described in 5.7) in §§5–7 of the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*. The resulting “determinateness of Spirit” he describes, accordingly, as “manifestation” (EG §383), the same term that he had employed in introducing the Concept (WL 6:239/GW 11:408–409,16–6/570–571; see 4.17), and which he treats as equivalent to “revelation” (*das Offenbaren*, EG §§383–384).

Spirit, Hegel says, “does not reveal *something*; rather, its determinateness and content is this revealing itself” (EG §383). That is, what Spirit

“reveals” is its revealing, which is itself. And its revealing is its freedom, its particularizing of itself while remaining identical with itself. So here, once again, Hegel uses a theological term (“revelation,” *das Offenbaren*) to describe something that may not coincide exactly with what traditional theology has in mind, when it speaks of “revelation,” but that nevertheless doesn’t coincide with any merely “secular” concept either. Once again, Hegel is trying to pin down a core of truth that can be found in traditional theology and to separate it from its untrue, “spuri-ously infinite” environment. He tells us here that the coming-into-being (*Werden*) of Nature itself from the “abstract Idea,” as described at the end of WL, was a “revelation,” but “as a revelation of the *Spirit that is free*,” here at the beginning of EG, revelation is “the *positing* of Nature as *its* [Spirit’s] world – a positing that, as reflection, is at the same time the *positing in advance* of the world as an independent Nature” (EG §384; emphasis added; see 4.8 on “positing in advance”).

But this “reflection,” in which Nature is posited “in advance” as independent of Spirit, is, of course, not Hegel’s final word. Just as reflection and Essence were superseded, in the Logic, by the Concept, in which positing and positing in advance were no longer opposed to one another, so here Nature is ultimately subsumed within the “eternally self-producing *unity* of Spirit’s objectivity and its ideality or its Concept . . . – Absolute Spirit” (EG §385), in which Spirit “understands itself as itself positing being, as itself producing its other, Nature, and finite Spirit, so that this other loses all shine of independence with respect to Spirit, ceases altogether to be a limitation for it, and appears only as a means by which Spirit attains absolute being-for-self” (EG §384A, 10:31/19). To find this sort of “creationism” plausible, we must, of course, find Hegel’s initial argument plausible, in the “Quality” chapter of WL, that it is only through the infinite that the finite achieves (full) “reality.” Spirit, and Absolute Spirit in particular, is the ultimate articulation of this infinite.

In pursuit of this final absoluteness or infinity, in which Spirit will understand itself as itself producing Nature and finite Spirit, Spirit passes through (as usual) two preliminary stages – each of which is limited by the other, and thus finite. The first stage is “subjective Spirit,” in which Spirit presents itself to itself naively as something immediately present (and similar, in that way, to Being or to Nature, as they initially presented themselves). And the second stage is “objective Spirit,” in which Spirit presents itself instead as “a *world* produced, and to be produced, by Spirit” (EG §385).

Subjective Spirit will include such things as feeling, habit, consciousness, self-consciousness, representations, thought, and practical thought. Objective Spirit, by contrast, will include things like property, contract, wrong, good and evil, family, civil society, the state, and world history. The "subjective" items are all apparently given to us immediately, as things of whose presence we can be directly aware. The "objective" ones, on the other hand, are more likely to present themselves to us as things that we *produce* or ought to produce. In that sense, they make up a "reality" or a "world" that is set over against us, its producers. In contrast to the "subjective" items, we might call the objective ones "artificial" – that is, made by us. Hegel will argue, however, that they are just as indispensable to Spirit's freedom, and thus to Spirit itself, as the subjective items are: that Spirit *must* take these external, "objective" forms, in order to be itself. And by the same token, he will argue that the "subjective" items – feeling, habit, consciousness, and so on – are themselves not simply "given," but rather are things that Spirit as freedom must *produce*, ways in which it must manifest itself, in order to be itself, to be freedom. By these two lines of argument, Hegel will dismantle the apparent contrast between the "subjective" Spirit and the "objective" Spiritual "world," showing that both of Spirit's "wings" (so to speak) are necessary manifestations of freedom. Thus, neither wing will have the *sheer givenness* that being or nature or a particular thought or social institution initially seems to have – they will both turn out to be necessary manifestations of *freedom*. But neither will they be *arbitrary* products – whatever we "feel like" producing; on the contrary, they will be *necessary* manifestations of freedom. Absolute Spirit, which manifests itself as art, religion, and philosophy, will then be the integration of these inner and outer, "subjective" and "objective" domains, an integration that's made possible by the understanding (which is shared, in different ways, by all three manifestations of Absolute Spirit) that both of these domains are necessary manifestations of freedom.

By integrating mutual "outsideness," the sheer logical *disconnectedness* of space and time, with the logical *connectedness* of the Concept – which Spirit does by extending the increasing centeredness or connectedness of "Physics," chemistry, and Life into its own being-for-self or abstraction from "outsideness" – Spirit integrates Nature with Logic (with "God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of Nature . . ." [WL 5:44/GW 21:34,39–2/50]). By integrating the more "natural" features of Spirit's own existence (feeling, habit, consciousness, and so on) with its more "artificial" features (property, wrong, the state, and so on), *Absolute Spirit* then eliminates the remaining finitude within Spirit,

which is its division into these mutually opposed domains, and thus consummates Spirit's integration of disconnectedness with connectedness, through a true infinity – which is “true,” as usual, insofar as it is the self-superseding of all of the finite stages that went before it.

6.4. Subjective Spirit: “Soul”

The form that Spirit takes immediately is its most “natural” form, which Hegel entitles “Soul” (*Seele*), and also “Natural Spirit” (*Naturgeist*) (EG §387). The study of this topic he entitles – confusingly for us – “Anthropology” (*Anthropologie*). As Michael Wolff suggests, Hegel may be borrowing this term from Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, §89, in which Kant contrasts with “rational psychology” (the Leibniz-Wolff doctrine of the immortal soul) a more modest “anthropology of the internal sense, a knowledge, that is to say, of our thinking self *as alive*” (KU 461).³ Hegel does not necessarily mean to imply that everything that he studies under this heading is distinctively human, rather than belonging to a wider range of animals.

“Soul” is exemplified in (1) what our life shares with that of the planet in general: climates, seasons, times of day; (2) distinctive racial and national characteristics; (3) the temperament of smaller groups and of individuals; (4) the characteristic contrasts between youth, adulthood, and old age, between male and female, and between sleeping and waking; and (5) feeling, self-feeling, and habit. To begin with, the “soul” is completely passive; it simply undergoes the effect of its climate, race, and so on. But that doesn't mean that it regards them as *external* to itself; a person may well regard her race or her temperament as part of (as we say) “who she is.” From the *individual's* temperament, Hegel proceeds to differences, and thus to *changes*, within the individual's life. The first of these are the sequential changes of the “ages of man.” Hegel interprets these as changes in the individual's relation to the “Genus,” arguing that in youth, the individual is opposed, by his ideals, hopes, and so on, to the world that the Genus represents, whereas in adulthood, the individual “recognizes [that world's] objective necessity and rationality,” and in old age he “accomplishes unity with this objectivity” (EG §396). The opposition, then, isn't really between the individual and something else; it is an opposition of the individual “*against himself*”

3 Michael Wolff, *Das Körper-Seele-Problem. Kommentar zu Hegel, Enzyklopädie (1830)*, §389, p. 31.

(EG §397; emphasis added), so that, Hegel says, "he seeks and finds *himself* in an other individual; – the sexual relationship" (ibid.).

Here, Hegel harks back to his earlier analyses of the sexual relationship, in "Life," in the WL, and in "The Animal Organism," in the EN. The individual is "against himself," according to "Life," in that his self-reproduction according to the standard embodied in the Genus (see 5.14) creates a tension that puts him at odds with his merely particular existence. Here, Hegel presents this tension initially as the theme of the diachronic "ages of man," and then describes it as being played out synchronically in the individual's need to "find himself" in a relationship to another individual, where this "finding" is again, as it was in "Life," the first – and only the first – way in which the individual's *going beyond* himself allows him to find himself (to resolve the tension between the Genus and his merely particular existence).

This relationship leads to a contrast – Hegel calls it a "natural difference" (*Naturunterschied*) – between a passive side that "remains united with itself in the feeling of ethics, love, and so on," and an active side that *produces* unity by working through the opposition between universal interests and personal ones (EG §397). Hegel alludes to the "family" as embodying this natural contrast, and no doubt he has in mind an idealized bourgeois family such as he describes later in the *Philosophy of Right*, in which the husband deals with the external, "universal" world while the wife sees to the family's internal harmony. Being aware of the variety of sexual divisions of labor in nature as well as in human societies, we can presumably agree, today, that these two functions *need to be performed*, without assuming that either function will necessarily be the sole or even the primary responsibility of one party or the other. As far as I can see, neither Hegel's previous nor his subsequent argument depends upon the assumption (which he unmistakably does make) that each function will be performed solely or at least primarily by one sex and by one individual within each sexual relationship – though we might well think (in Hegel's partial defense) that at any given moment, in a particular relationship, one partner is *likely* to be performing one function to a greater degree than the other partner, and vice versa for the other function.

Hegel's next step is to identify the division (which emerged in the sexual relationship) of individuality into a "for itself" aspect and a merely existing, "in itself" aspect, as the soul's "awakening," in contrast to its "sleep" (EG §398). While literal waking and sleep are successive, alternating states – a circumstance that Hegel identifies as an "infinite

progression” – their relationship is in fact summed up “affirmatively” (that is, as a true infinity) in *sensation* (*Empfindung*) (EG §399). This is because sensation combines the multiple determinatenesses of the waking world with the universality of the sleeping self, or the “being” of the sleeping self with the “being-for-self” of the waking self:

The sentient soul places the manifold within itself and thus removes the opposition between its being-for-self or subjectivity and its immediacy or substantial being-in-itself – not, however, as this was done in the relapse from the waking state into sleep, when its being-for-self *made way* for its opposite, the mere being-in-itself. On the contrary, *its being-for-self preserves, develops, and proves itself in the alteration, in the other.*

(EG §399A; 10:96/72; emphasis added)

Here, as is appropriate for a true infinity, we have precisely the standard formula for freedom: being “with oneself in the other.” In this way, “sensation” already embodies the pattern that will be fundamental for Spirit as such. Hegel’s point is that in sensation, the soul is aware of *itself* as experiencing the sensation, and in that sense, there is already a going beyond the sensation’s immediacy as something that merely happens. It happens *to* someone. Thus the emergence of this germ of “subjectivity” or selfhood from the passive “natural soul” that Hegel has been discussing up to this point (EG §§391–402) follows precisely the pattern by which “negativity” yielded the “beginning of the Subject” in the Something, and spurious infinity yielded true infinity, in the WL: Like the original negation of “quality” by its other, and the self-repeating negation of the finite by the spurious infinity, both the simple negation of sleep by awakening, and their endless alternation, are overcome by a second negation in which the one (whether it be the Something, the true infinity, the awakening, or the Subject) takes the other into itself, while nevertheless preserving itself in so doing.⁴

4 Thus I think Iring Fetscher is mistaken when he regards Hegel’s use of the image of the “lightning-stroke of subjectivity breaking through the form of Spirit’s immediacy” (EG §398A; 10:90/67) as perhaps acknowledging that Hegel hasn’t been able to fully explain the emergence of “awakening” and of the subjectivity that it inaugurates (I. Fetscher, *Hegel’s Lehre vom Menschen. Kommentar zu den §§387 bis 482 der Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften* [Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1970], p. 49). The division of for-itself and in-itself in the sexual relationship, deriving from the tension between particularity and the Genus that emerged in the “ages of man,” seems to me to be an effective explanation of the emergence of subjectivity, when it is read in the context of the WL’s accounts of Life and Cognition, Essence and the Concept, and the “beginning of the Subject” in negativity and true infinity.

This aspect of sensation emerges more explicitly as *feeling*, in the “feeling soul” (*fühlende Seele*) (EG §§402–403). “Feeling” is less purely passive than simple sensation; it is how *one* feels, all the feelings that *one* has. Ultimately it yields a division between particular feelings, on the one hand, and the subject that has them, on the other. Hegel refers to this “subject” as “self-feeling” (EG §407). He takes somnambulism and hypnotic states as instances of feeling without any self-feeling attached (EG §406), and madness (*Verrücktheit*) as a state of mind in which self-feeling exists, but is confined to a *particular* feeling, rather than ranging over and organizing all of them (EG §408). *Habit* (*Gewohnheit*), on the other hand,

reduces the particulars of feelings (and of consciousness as well) to a mere feature of its being. In this way the soul has the content *in its possession*, and contains it in such a way that the soul is not in these determinations *as* sensing, nor as distinguishing itself from them in a relationship, nor sunken in them, but has them and moves in them, without sensation or consciousness of the fact. It is *free* from them, insofar as it is not interested in or occupied with them; and while it exists *in* these forms as its possession, it is at the same time *open* to be otherwise active and engaged, whether with sensation or with spiritual consciousness in general.

(EG §410; 10:183–184/140; emphasis added)

Habit is produced by repetition and practice. It is like nature (and consequently has been called a “second nature”) in that it is “mechanical” and an “immediate being” of the soul (EG §410R; 10:184/141), but it is liberating insofar as it creates the broader possibilities mentioned in the block quote. It operates in three main ways: by a *hardening against* external sensations (Hegel mentions cold, heat, sweet tastes, and so on); by a *familiarity with* the satisfaction of a drive, which makes additional satisfaction of the same kind less attractive; and by the habituation of *skill*, in which practice enables the soul to subject the body and the world, as its instruments, to itself (EG §410R; 10:185–186/141–142). Through all of these, the subject asserts itself over against its contents. Hegel’s rubric for this assertion of the subject is “actual soul,” for which the body is an externality that “represents not itself, but the soul, of which it is the *sign*” (EG §411). Examples of this “sign” activity are the human upright posture, the functioning of the hand and of the mouth, with its laughter and weeping, and “the note of spirituality diffused over the whole, which at once announces the body as the externality of a higher nature” (*ibid.*).

This assertion of the Subject ultimately carries with it a “division” (*Urteil*) in which “the ‘I’ excludes from itself the sum total of its merely natural determinations as an object, a world external to it, and relates to that world in such a way that in it, the ‘I’ is immediately reflected in itself” – the relationship of *Consciousness* (EG §412).

6.5. Subjective Spirit: “Consciousness”

Because Consciousness is the way in which Spirit “appears” (as opposed to its natural being, in the Soul, and its Truth, as Spirit proper), its study is called “phenomenology.” There is, in fact, an extensive parallelism between the EG’s “phenomenology of spirit,” which is its study of Consciousness (in the broadest sense), and the first three sections of Hegel’s original *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807).

As a stage of appearance, Consciousness is a stage of “reflection” or of “relation” (see 4.13 on “appearance” and the “essential relation”), and as a stage of “relation” it is, “like relation in general, the contradiction between the self-standingness of the two sides, and their identity, in which they are superseded” (EG §414). This contradiction is that “alongside the abstract certainty that Spirit has [in Consciousness] of being ‘with itself’ [*bei sich selber*], it has the precisely opposite certainty of relating to something that is essentially *other* than itself” (EG §416A). Spirit, in Consciousness, is certain of being ‘with itself’ (or ‘at home’), because Consciousness is a development, as we have seen, of Spirit’s essential freedom (EG §382; see 6.3). But because, at the same time, the ‘I’ in Consciousness “*excludes* from itself the sum total of its merely natural determinations as an *object, a world external to it*” (EG §412; emphasis added), it is also certain of relating to something that is essentially other than itself, and thus of *not* being ‘with itself.’ Hegel describes Kant and Fichte as entangled in this contradiction, and Spinoza as avoiding it only by lacking the notion of free subjectivity in the first place (EG §415R). Spirit’s goal in its stage of Consciousness, Hegel says, is to “make . . . its *appearance* identical with its *essence* – to raise its self-certainty” (whose contradictory nature we have just been describing) “to *truth*” (EG §416; emphasis added) – that is, to the state in which its “reality is in accord with its Concept” (WL 6:265/GW 12:26,10/593), as a self-contradictory reality, like this one, cannot be.

The stages of this elevation of certainty to truth are:

- a. Consciousness in general, which has an object [*Gegenstand*] as such.

- b. Self-consciousness, for which 'I' is the object.
- c. The unity of Consciousness and Self-consciousness, in which Spirit views the object's content as itself, and itself as determined in and for itself: *Reason, the Concept of Spirit*. (EG §417)

Consciousness in general, or as such, being "immediate," conceives of its object as "a being, Something, an existing thing, a singular, and so forth": as something *external* to Consciousness (EG §418). These concepts are all "logical determinations" (EG §419), and thus Consciousness isn't engaged in mere sensual receptivity: It is "perceiving," *wahrnehmend*, "taking to be true" (EG §420), combining singular things with universality in a way that Hegel describes as containing, in fact, "the contradiction of the finite" (EG §421) – presumably because this universality goes beyond the singularity in the same way that the "limit" went beyond the Something, pointing ultimately toward the infinite (see 3.6–3.7).

The contradiction that he found in "perception" is resolved, Hegel says, by understanding the manifold determinations of the sensible as "the *appearance* of an *inner* that is for itself" (EG §422A). This "inner" is described as "force" and "cause," and ultimately as "law" (*ibid.*). This "law" relates determinations that aren't distinguished as "external" to each other; instead, each one "lies immediately in the other," so that their "inner difference" is in fact "*the difference that is not a difference*" (EG §423). Here we can recall the way in which the absence of selfhood in the multiplicity of Something and other, and of finite things, was overcome by the "ought" and infinity (3.7), which resolved the differences within that multiplicity into a higher selfhood and unity (as, indeed, "difference" itself was resolved into the higher unity of Ground, via Diversity, Opposition, and Contradiction [4.10–4.12]). Hegel's point is that the "object" that Consciousness is trying to comprehend as such encounters the same problems of selfhood that determinate being and its successors encountered in "Quality" in the WL ("precisely by *excluding* others from itself, the singular content relates itself to others, and proves . . . to have others in itself" [EG §419A]), and that as in "Quality," so here also, the only way to resolve these problems is for the manifold determinations of the sensible to go beyond themselves into a higher unity in the manner of "negativity," "true infinity," or the Concept. The resulting "difference that is not a difference," Hegel entitles "Self-consciousness," because it achieves selfhood, but without giving up the relation between 'I' and object that constituted

Consciousness: It is just that this relation is now between the 'I' and itself (as its own object).

6.5.1 *Self-Consciousness, "Recognition," and Reason.* The formula for Self-consciousness, Hegel says, "is 'I = I.' Thus it is without *reality*, since it itself, which is its object, is not an object, because no difference is present between the object and itself" (EG §424; emphasis added). The initial, "*abstract* Self-consciousness is the *first* negation of Consciousness, and consequently is also burdened with an external object, or formally with the negation of itself; thus it is . . . the contradiction between its being Self-consciousness and its being Consciousness" (EG §425; emphasis added). Self-consciousness in its initial, "abstract" phase is "*burdened* with an external object," I suggest, in the sense that it is still trying to be consciousness of an "object"; but since "no difference is present between the object and itself," it *can't be* an "object" for itself; so this structure of Consciousness and object is a "burden" – indeed, a contradiction – for it.

This contradiction can only be resolved, Hegel says, by a dual process, in which abstract Self-consciousness "gives content and objectivity to its abstract knowledge of itself, and in reverse . . . supersedes the *given* objectivity and posits it as identical with itself" (ibid.). To understand this dual process, it may be helpful to remember the dual process by which the spurious infinite became true infinity. Like "abstract Self-consciousness," the spurious infinity was the first negation of what went before it (in its case, of the finite), and consequently it failed to be truly infinite (since it was still bounded and limited by the finite that it negated). Similarly, abstract Self-consciousness still involves an external object, or Consciousness, which prevents it from really being *Self-consciousness*. Spurious infinity overcame its contradiction through a dual process, in which (1) it superseded itself ("infinity" as the negation of the finite) by understanding itself not as something independent, but as the self-supersession of the finite, and (2) it superseded the finite by understanding it not as something independent but as something that achieves reality only by superseding itself, in the infinite. The resulting true infinity no longer opposed the finite to the infinite, but rather showed their mutual interdependence. Abstract Self-consciousness, similarly, overcomes its contradiction through the dual process of (1) treating itself not as abstract, but as having "content and objectivity," and (2) treating the "*given* objectivity" not as given to it, but as identical with itself. The parallels with the two aspects

of the supersession of spurious infinity are evident. Like true infinity, the resulting concrete Self-consciousness will embody what was true in both of the prior stages (in this case, Consciousness and abstract Self-consciousness), while omitting the abstract opposition between them.

Hegel spells this process out in three stages: "desire" (*Begierde*), the "process of recognition" (of *Anerkennung*), and "universal Self-consciousness." "Desire" is the singular Self-consciousness that is "simply self-identical but at the same time, in contradiction to this, related to an external object" (EG §425A, 10:215). Because abstract Self-consciousness, not being different from itself, can't be an object for itself, it postulates an object that, however, exists only in order to demonstrate its own nothingness and Self-consciousness's objectivity. Through its "activity" (*Tätigkeit*), in gobbling up the external object (EG §427, 427A), "desire" demonstrates the object's nothingness and its own objectivity (as capable of gobbling up objects). This satisfaction is purely temporary, however; with the disappearance of the first object, the need for another one arises. This is the familiar frustrating "infinite progress" (EG §428A). However, "as the negation of *immediacy* and of singularity," this process of "desire" results in "the determination of *universality* and of the *identity* of Self-consciousness with its object" (EG §429). The process negates immediacy and singularity because it makes the subject dependent on the object that it consumes, and vice versa; this creates "universality" by relating Self-consciousness to innumerable independent objects, with which it is "identical" (through their mutual dependence, the one eating, the others being eaten), while still being superior to them – and thus "universal" – by functioning, in their relationship, as the "activity" (as the one that does the eating). This universality, Hegel says, then undergoes a "judgment," an "original division" (*Urteil*), through "the consciousness of a *free* object, in which 'I' has the knowledge of itself as 'I,' but which is also still outside it" (EG §429; emphasis added) – this being, of course, the primal scene of "recognition."

Why does this "division" happen? It happens because insofar as Self-conscious is "universal," it needs (as in the Concept) to particularize itself in a plurality of particular Self-consciousnesses. Ultimately, this need for particularization can be traced back, as usual, to the pattern whereby true infinity has to be the self-supersession of finite things. The "universal," likewise, has to be the self-supersession of distinct particulars. So when Self-consciousness as "desire" (with its dependence on an endless succession of objects on which to demonstrate their nothingness and

its own objectivity) emerges as a “*universal*,” vis-à-vis those objects, its relation to them is transformed: They must become “*free* objects,” so as to be *capable* of the self-supersession by which a “*universal*,” as such, is constituted.⁵

Being free *objects*, however, they must be recognizable as free. This, of course, is the next problem:

A Self-consciousness is for a Self-consciousness [compare PhG §177] initially only *immediately*, as an other for an *other*. In him, as I, I contemplate myself, but I also contemplate in him an immediately existing [*daseiend*] other object which, as ‘I,’ is absolutely self-standing in relation to me. The supersession of Self-consciousness’s *singularity* was the *first* supersession; it is determined thereby only as a *particular*. This contradiction generates the drive to *show* oneself as a free self and to be present [*da zu sein*] for the other as a free self – the process of *recognition*.

(EG §430)

If Self-consciousness is “determined . . . only as a *particular*,” it is not determined as going beyond itself – as free. But as a “free object” (§429), it must be determined as free. To be determined in this way, Hegel proposes, it must be “present for the other as a free self,” through “recognition” (§430).

The “process of recognition,” Hegel says, is a “*struggle*” in which I need to supersede the immediacy of the other, and my own immediacy as well (§431), in order to show that I or we go beyond our immediacy, in freedom. This struggle “is a matter of life and death” (§432), since “the absolute proof of freedom, in the struggle for recognition, is death” (§432A). If one was willing to risk death, it is clear that one was free. However, “*life* is just as essential as freedom” (§433; emphasis added), because one gets no recognition from a dead person and because “life is the determinate being [*Dasein*] of one’s freedom” (§432). Consequently, the struggle for recognition ends, initially, with a “one-sided”

5 A parallel reading of §175 (TWA 3:143) of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* might go a long way toward unlocking that mysterious and crucial transition. This passage, EG §429, explains how Self-consciousness in general relates, for Hegel, to particular Self-consciousnesses. In Chapter 5, note 24, I pointed out how Hegel’s parallel account of the “doubling” of the individual, and its “identity with the other individual,” in Life and in the absolute Idea (5.14 and 5.17), provides his answer to Michael Inwood’s and Willem deVries’s question of how Hegel thinks that the pure thoughts that constitute the absolute Idea relate to the pure thoughts that constitute an individual ‘I.’ In both the Idea and EG §429, I suggest, Hegel’s most fundamental thought is the one that I stated in the text: that the “universal” (that is, the infinite) has to be the self-supersession of distinct particulars (that is, finites).

solution in which one party gives up his demand for recognition (so as to be assured of remaining alive), and recognition flows in only one direction, from the one who gave up his demand to the one who did not. This is the "relationship of master and bondsman" (*Herr und Knecht*) (§433).

Hegel identifies two aspects of this relationship. On the one hand, since the master's "means," the bondsman, must also be kept alive, the sheer destruction of the object is now replaced by a *sharing* of needs and of the far-sighted provision for satisfying them. Hegel calls this sharing a "form of universality" (§434). On the other hand, the difference between the two protagonists has the result that in serving the master, the bondsman "works off his singular and personal will, supercedes the inner immediacy of desire," and thus finds the "beginning of wisdom in the fear of the lord" (or "master": *Herr*), and makes the transition to "universal Self-consciousness" (§435). Both through the sharing of needs and through the "discipline that breaks his personal will" (§435A, 10:225) (where this personal will, *Eigenwille*, is equivalent to what Hegel elsewhere calls "arbitrariness," *Willkür* [see 5.7]), the bondsman becomes capable of taking the broader perspective of "universal Self-consciousness," which is

the affirmative knowledge of himself in the other self, each of which, as free singularity, *has absolute self-standingness*, but – as a result of the negation of its immediacy or desire – *does not differentiate itself from the other*, is universal and objective and has real universality and reciprocity [*Gegenseitigkeit*] in such a way that it knows itself as recognized in the free other and knows this insofar as it recognizes the other and knows it to be free.

(EG §436; emphasis added)

Hegel identifies this vision as "the form of the consciousness of the *substance* of all essential spirituality, of the family, fatherland, the State, as well as of all virtues, love, friendship, bravery, honor, fame" (though not of honor without content, vain fame, and so forth) (§436R).

In the lectures that are quoted in the Additions, Hegel explains that the master, too, proceeds to "universal Self-consciousness" because "the master who stood over against the bondsman was not yet truly free, since he did not yet entirely see himself in the other. Consequently, it is only through the bondsman's becoming free that the master too becomes completely free" (§436A; compare §435A). The master needs to "see himself in the other," we can interpret, because one can "be present

for the other as a free self" (§430) only insofar as the other is *capable of appreciating* freedom, which is only to the extent that the other is capable of *being* free. So the master needs to see and relate to that capacity, in the other, in order to be present for the other in the way that – according to the argument of §430 – he needs to be present.

It is important to realize that Hegel does *not* say, and his argument does not demonstrate, that the master needs to be "recognized" as free by any actual being in order to be free. What Hegel does say and demonstrate is that the master needs to "be present for the other as a free self," and that in order to be present in this way, he needs to recognize the *other's* capacity for freedom (since he can't "be present" as free to an other who isn't capable of freedom and therefore isn't capable of appreciating freedom in him). This seems to be the natural interpretation of Hegel's statement that each free self "knows itself as recognized in the free other . . . *insofar as it recognizes the other and knows it to be free*" (EG §436; emphasis added). It knows itself as recognized "in" the other – not, note well, "by" the other – *only* in that, and to the extent that, it recognizes the other. Thus, contrary to what is often suggested, Hegel's argument for mutual recognition does not make anything a "social construct." What freedom requires, according to the "recognition" argument in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, is not membership in a mutual-congratulation club, but willingness to accept objectively qualified others into the club that one wants to belong to, objectively, oneself.⁶

6 Thus, the argument that I have analyzed does not support Robert Brandom's conclusion that a person "is free insofar as he is one of us. There is no objective fact of the matter concerning his freedom to which we can appeal beyond the judgment of our own community. . . . On this view, then, man is not objectively free" ("Freedom and Constraint by Norms," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16 [1979], p. 192). Certainly freedom, for Hegel, is not "objective" in the same way that rocks and tables are objective, but it *is* or can be "objective" in the way that Hegel himself uses that word, in the WL and the EG (see 5.9 and 6.7, respectively); and Hegel's account of "recognition" is precisely about how we can be "*conscious*" of freedom, in our *Gegenstand*, as well as being "self-conscious" of it (cf. EG §417 and §437). Brandom's later statement that for Hegel, "to be a self . . . is to be taken or treated as one by those one takes or treats as one; to be recognized by those one recognizes" (*Tales of the Mighty Dead. Historical Essays on the Metaphysics of Intentionality* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002], pp. 216 – 217), doesn't seem to be supported by Hegel's EG account of recognition, either. Nor, turning to another commentator, does Hegel's recognition argument in the EG support anything like what Michael N. Forster calls the "enduring community consensus theory of truth . . . according to which the very nature of truth is such that it is necessary and sufficient for a claim's truth that it be agreed upon and continue to be agreed upon by a community or a communal tradition" (*Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

In “universal Self-consciousness” we see Hegel’s version of Kant’s “kingdom of ends,” but Hegel’s version differs from Kant’s in that Hegel has derived the mutual recognition of the two parties from their shared relationship to Self-consciousness as such, through the particularization of the universal, and thus from a “concrete” conception of freedom (as in the Concept and the Idea [see 5.17], and in true infinity), rather than – as Kant unsuccessfully tried to derive it – from the mere form of freedom (see 2.7). “Concreteness” succeeds where Kantian abstraction failed, because in “concreteness,” the *reality* of the parties depends upon their self-transcendence into the universal Self-consciousness of which they are the particularization, so that their relation to each other, in that particularization, must be *in keeping with* that dependence, whereas in Kantian abstraction, the independent reality of finite individuals, as such, doesn’t depend upon their infinite autonomy, and consequently their mutual relations, as finite, don’t have to be in keeping with that autonomy.

The effect of this particularization of the universal, as I explained, is not to make the particular Self-consciousnesses dependent upon the recognition that they may or may not actually receive from other Self-consciousnesses, but to make them dependent on their own *attitude toward* those others: they are Self-consciousnesses, and free, “insofar as they recognize the other and know it to be free” – that is, insofar as they willingly take part in (recognize that they are particularizations of) the universal Self-consciousness.

Hegel describes this “universal Self-consciousness” as a “unity of Consciousness and Self-consciousness” (§437) because in it, “Spirit views the content of the object” (that is, of its Consciousness) “as *itself*” (and thus as its Self-consciousness) (§417; emphasis added). (Compare the unity of finite and infinite that was achieved in true infinity, because in it, the content of the finite was viewed by the infinite not as abstractly opposed to it, but as itself.) The content of Consciousness’s object is Spirit “*itself*” insofar as each Self-consciousness “does not differentiate

1998], p. 226) – a theory that Forster thinks Hegel’s conclusion that “self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness” (PhG §175/TWA 3:144; compare EG §430) is meant to support (*Hegel’s Idea*, p. 250). I don’t have the space in this book to interpret Hegel’s mutual recognition argument in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but in view of its close similarity to the present argument in the EG, it seems very unlikely that its purpose is as different from that of the present argument as it would have to be in order to support either the theory of “truth” that Forster ascribes to Hegel, or the conception of selfhood that Brandom ascribes to Hegel.

itself from the other" (§436). Hegel's argument for the need for recognition, in EG §430, and thus ultimately for this non-"differentiation" of oneself from the other, parallels his arguments, in the Logic's chapter on the Idea, for the living individual's "identity with the other individual" (WL 6:485/GW 12:190,14/773; see 5.14), and for the objective Concept's having "*its own* objectivity" in its other (WL 6: 549/GW 12:236,9–11/824; see 5.17). Hegel consequently describes this non-differentiation as a form of the same "reason" (*Vernunft*) that also first appeared in the Idea, differing from the Idea only in that the Concept, here, exists "for itself" as Consciousness and Consciousness's external object (EG §437R) – that is, it embodies the externality of Nature, and thus of Consciousness, combined with the Idea's subject/object unity.

We can also add, picking up Hegel's reference to "all virtues, *love, friendship, bravery, honor, fame,*" and so forth (EG §436R; emphasis added), that this "reason" in which each Self-consciousness "does not differentiate itself from the other" (§436) is not distinguishable from a relationship of love, in a broad sense of that term such as we encounter in Plato and in mysticism. As a further development, in the realms of nature and Consciousness, of the Logic's Idea and Concept, Spirit's "universal Self-consciousness" is a concretization of the "*free love*" in which the Concept "bears itself toward what is different from it as toward its own self" (WL 6:277/GW 12:35,3–5/603; see 5.2). In the remainder of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, we will see how this "reason/love" articulates itself as intelligence, ethics, world history, art, religion, and philosophy.

First, however, there is one more important question about Hegel's argument for "mutual recognition" whose answer can be found in Self-consciousness's "concreteness." This is the question, Why must my "recognition" of the freedom of others have *practical consequences* – why should it constrain my actions in relation to them, as "love, friendship," and so forth, obviously would – rather than being merely a disinterested, "theoretical" acknowledgement of a feature that they possess? The answer to this question is that what is being accomplished at the end of "Self-consciousness" is not just Consciousness of a fact about each of the parties, but also the *Self-consciousness* that is "the drive to posit what it is in itself . . . to liberate itself from its sensuality" (§425). This "drive" and "positing" are clearly not passive theory; they are active and practical (comparable in that way to the "ought" in "Quality"). When this Self-consciousness is "divided" into "free object[s]" (§429), these objects retain their identity with each other (they "do not differentiate [themselves] from the other" [EG §436]), in the same way that the

living individuals and persons, in the Idea, retained their "identity with the other individual," and so on; and because of what Self-consciousness is, the identity of the "free object[s]" with each other is just as active and practical (self-"positing") as it is passive and theoretical (Conscious), so the relations between them must be just as practical as they are theoretical. And their "recognition" of each other's freedom, in particular, must be just as practical as it is theoretical.

Theory and practice were distinguished from one another in "Cognition," which was the intermediate, "relational" form of the Idea; they are distinguished again within "Consciousness"; and they will be distinguished yet another time in "Spirit as Such"; but in each case the distinction is overcome (WL 6:545/GW 12:233,20–2/821; EG §§438–439; EG §§481–482), ultimately by the force of the "in and for itself" character of the Concept, where the "for itself" encapsulates the self-supersession that first appeared in negativity and true infinity, and that accomplished reality by uniting something like theory (namely, negation, or finitude) with something like practice (namely, second negation, or the "ought"). On the fundamental level of negativity and true infinity, theory and practice are inseparable aspects of one reality.⁷

6.6. Subjective Spirit: "Spirit as Such," Theoretical, Practical, and Free

Having arrived at "reason" and superseded the contrast between Consciousness and Self-Consciousness, subjective Spirit has now also superseded the contrast between "Soul" and "Consciousness" that created its first two divisions. In place of "natural Spirit" (Soul) and of "Spirit in its relation or particularization" (Consciousness), we now have "Spirit

⁷ Paul Redding's *Hegel's Hermeneutics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996) is the only book I'm aware of that suggests that Hegel's account of "recognition," in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Spirit*, is an elaboration of ideas that first emerge (within the *Encyclopedia*) in his *Logic*. (See *Hegel's Hermeneutics*, pp. 156–165.) Robert R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), gives a useful discussion (pp. 300–312) of Hegel's views on whole/part relationships, Mechanism, and Chemism in the *Science of Logic*, but Williams introduces them only in connection with the topic of "The State as a Social Organism" (in contrast to social contract theories of the state). As for Hegel's account of "recognition," itself, in the *Encyclopedia* and elsewhere, Williams doesn't appear to view the *Logic* as necessary for making sense of it. As far as I know, my account of Hegel's arguments against egoism in the *Logic's* "Idea" and in "Self-consciousness" – and of the relation between the two arguments – is new, in the literature.

determining itself in itself" (§387), or "Spirit *as such*" (§387A, 10:40/26). Hegel entitles the analysis of (subjective) Spirit as such, "Psychology" (*Psychologie*), using the Greek root *psuche* to designate subjective Spirit in its fully developed form, whereas he had used the Germanic *Seele* ("soul") for subjective Spirit in its initial, least-developed form (as "natural Spirit," in the so-called "Anthropology").

Like the Idea, which combined the unity of the subjective Concept with the diversity of Objectivity, subjective Spirit as such – which I'll refer to in this section simply as "subjective Spirit" – combines the "substance"-like unity of "natural Spirit" (the "soul") with this unity's self-division, which was characteristic of "Consciousness" in the broad sense (including Self-consciousness) (§440A, 10:230). The substance-like unity has been regained as a result of Consciousness's overcoming of its internal divisions; but subjective Spirit will have its own internal divisions, as well. Again, like the Idea, subjective Spirit will progress through a stage of theoretical Spirit (corresponding to the "Idea of the true") and a stage of practical Spirit (corresponding to the "Idea of the good"). Theoretical Spirit embodies Reason's necessary project of positing its immediate determinateness as "its own" (*das Seinige*) – so that it will be *free* – while practical Spirit embodies Reason's equally necessary project of positing its determinateness not *only* as its own, but as what *is* (*das Seiende*) (§443).

The phases of theoretical spirit – beginning with its immediate determinateness and making it, by stages, its "own" – are "intuition" (*Anschauung*), "representation" (*Vorstellung*), and "thought" (*Denken*). This sequence expands upon the critique of the "given" that Hegel had presented earlier in his accounts of "shine" (see 4.7) and of Consciousness (6.5) (as well as, famously, in Chapters 1–3 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*).

Intuition is initially simply "feeling," in the sense of sheer immediacy (what one "finds" in oneself) (§446), but this state divides into (1) "attention, without which nothing is *for*" the Spirit, and which Hegel describes as "active inwardization [*Erinnerung*], the moment of *ownness*," and (2) Intelligence's determination of the feeling's content as "*being outside itself*, projecting it into *time and space*, which are the *forms* in which it is intuitive" (§448). Hegel explains that in echoing Kant's doctrine, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, that time and space are the "forms" of intuition, he does not endorse Kant's view that they "are only *subjective* forms," because in "projecting" intuition's content into time and space, as Hegel says it does, Intelligence is availing itself of something that has already been set up for it by the "creative eternal Idea" (§448A,

10:253/198), at the beginning of the *Philosophy of Nature*. Intelligence, however, directs its attention at this externality itself, and thus “awakens to” and “recollects” or inwardizes (*erinnert*) itself in this, its immediacy, and as a result, intuition becomes “representation,” which no longer needs the immediacy and the sheer “finding” that were characteristic of intuition (§450).

However, Intelligence’s “own”

is still conditioned by immediacy, is not yet itself manifestly [*an ihm*] being. Intelligence’s path, in the forms of representation, is to make immediacy equally internal, to put itself into itself as an intuition [*sich in sich selbst anschauend zu setzen*], to supersede itself as the subjectivity of interiority and in itself to “externalize” itself [*ihrer sich entäußern*] and to be in itself in its own externality.

(EG §451)

Intelligence does this, first, through recollection properly so-called, in which an inner image is formed and is related to the prior intuition – through a “universality” – as an image of it (§454); then through imagination [*Einbildungskraft*], in which images are “associated” with one another by virtue, again, of some “universal representation” (§455); and finally in “sign-making fantasy” [*Zeichen machende Phantasie*], in which Intelligence becomes self-externalizing, producing intuitions (§457), and “uses filled space and time, intuition, as its own, deletes their immediate and proper content and gives them another content as their import and soul” (§458). At this point, Intelligence is finally able to “intuit” itself, in its signs, and thus has become “manifestly being” (as Hegel put it in §451), combining ownness (*das Seinige*) and being (*das Seiende*) as it had to do in order to be Reason (§443, cited earlier).

Bearing in mind Hegel’s standing principle of “determinate negation,” that later stages preserve (while also cancelling) earlier stages within them, it is clear that this account of mental life does not – as has been said of his *Phenomenology of Spirit* – “reject dualism [about mind and body] in favor of physicalism and behaviorism.”⁸ Intuitions, images, representations, and imagination are all preserved (while also cancelled) within the reality of the “sign-making” being. It is certainly true that Hegel doesn’t endorse dualism – the doctrine that inner states have no necessary relationship to external signs and actions. But he grants it

8 Michael N. Forster, *Hegel’s Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 4; emphasis added.

the partial truth that he grants to “ownness,” which is a necessary *aspect* of the more adequate totality. How could a philosopher who demonstrates the unreality of the *finite* be a physicalist or a behaviorist? The point of the statement that Intelligence “deletes the immediate and proper content [of space, time, and intuition] and gives them another content [namely, signs] as their import and soul” (§458), is clearly that neither “behavior” nor the “physical” can any longer be taken merely “at face value,” as physicalist and behaviorist reductionism and eliminative materialism expect us to take them. Hegel wants us to know that there are other alternatives to Cartesian dualism besides (physicalist, behaviorist, or eliminative) materialism. Spirit, after all, is a “coming back out of Nature” (EG §381), to itself, and the “positing of Nature as *its* [Spirit’s] world” (§384).⁹ Hegel’s treatment of signs, language, and (eventually) human action will all be in keeping with these principles.

From “signs,” Hegel proceeds, not surprisingly, to language (§459; note the important references backward to “anthropology” and forward to the “understanding” [§459R]). The shape taken by language here is the “name,” which connects the “representation, as something internal, with the intuition, as something external” (§460). This connection, which itself is initially “external,” needs to be inwardized or “recollected” (*ibid.*), made Intelligence’s “own” (§461); this is the

9 Michael Forster quotes numerous passages in which Hegel polemicizes against Cartesian dualism, but none in which he reduces mental states to physical states or behavior, *as such*, or eliminates mental states altogether. Just as the entire *Logic* and *Encyclopedia* must be read in the light of the *Logic*’s first chapter on how the finite goes beyond itself, in infinity, so also the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (including what it says about the priority of “action” over inner intentions, in the passages that Forster cites) must be read in the light of the “infinity” that forms the transition from Consciousness to Self-Consciousness (PhG §160–163, 3:131–133), and that clearly goes beyond the usual physicalist and materialist conceptions of reality. Hegel makes his critical attitude toward both materialism and dualism explicit at EG §389A, TWA 10:49/34. In his subtle *Das Körper-Seele-Problem. Kommentar zu Hegel, Enzyklopädie (1830), §389* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1992), Michael Wolff maintains that “Hegel has no reason to raise any objection to speaking of a perceiving, thinking or even knowing *matter*. . . . This is also the sense in which we are to understand Hegel when he speaks of the ‘emergence of the Spirit from nature,’” and so on (p. 73; emphasis added), but Wolff does not address the lines that I quoted in the text from EG §381 and §384, or Hegel’s principle that “The finite is not the real, but the infinite” (WL 5:164/GW 21:136, 9/149), all of which imply that Spirit goes beyond nature in such a way that it would *not* make sense to say that nature (or matter) *as such* “perceives,” “thinks,” or “knows.” Wolff does make it clear on the next page that matter does these things only via “supersession” (*Aufhebung*) (p. 74). What he does not make clear is that the result of this supersession – as exemplified in true infinity, which governs Spirit and according to which the finite is real only insofar as it goes beyond itself – is

job of "memory" (*Gedächtnis*, which "deals in general only with signs" [§458R]), which will proceed through stages paralleling those by which immediate intuition was inwardized (§461). In the first stage – "name-retaining memory" – the connection between the outer intuition and the inner representation is made "universal, that is, lasting," so that the content and the sign "become *one* representation" (§461). In the second stage – "reproducing memory" – names are both inwardized, so that no intuition or image is needed and they can be "associated" with one another through the inward meaning (*Bedeutung*) that they are given (§462), and also "externalized" (*Entäußert*) as mere sounds. This difference between the meaning and the name is superseded in "*mechanical* memory," in which the "most extreme inwardization of representation is its most extreme externalization, in which it posits itself as the *being*, the universal space of names as such, that is, of senseless words," in "rote memory" (*auswendig behalten*) (§463). Hegel's point here is dual. First, it is that the purely mechanical and external stringing together of meaningless words is what is left when intuitions and images have been superseded, but the structures of language have not yet been introduced.¹⁰

But Hegel also says, about this absence of "meaning," that thought in its "activity" (*Tätigkeit*) "no longer has a meaning (*Bedeutung*) . . . [because] its objectivity is no longer something diverse (*verschieden*) from the subjective, just as this interiority [that is, the subjective] is manifestly being (*an ihr selbst seiend*)" (§464; emphasis added). In the final stage of theoretical Spirit, which is "thought," the subjective and the objective are not diverse. This is the fundamental thesis of Hegel's idealism (he repeats it in §465A as the paradoxical claim that "*Thought is being*"). Hegel's

that Hegel has just as clear an affinity to the "idealism" of Plato and Kant as he has to the "materialism" of Robinet and Diderot. To expand one's sense of the range of options available in present-day philosophy of mind, and consequently also available to Hegel, I recommend Hilary Putnam, "Philosophy and Our Mental Life," in N. Block, ed., *Readings in the Philosophy of Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 134–143 (also in Putnam's *Mind, Language, and Reality, Philosophical Papers*, vol. 2 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975]), in which Putnam argues that "we have what we always wanted – an autonomous mental life. And we need no mysteries, no ghostly agents, no *élan vital* to have it" (p. 142), because "Diderot and Descartes were both wrong in assuming that if we are matter, or our souls are material, then there is a *physical explanation* for our behavior" (p. 137; emphasis added).

- 10 Willem deVries gives an admirable explanation of this aspect of "mechanical memory" in his *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 157–163. He tends, however, to skip over the "idealism" that stands out, for instance, in Hegel's next paragraph (EG §464).

systematic defense of this thesis is in the *Science of Logic's* Doctrine of Being and Doctrine of the Concept; here, he *presupposes* its truth, so that any interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of "Spirit" that aims to present Hegel's understanding of its subject matter has no alternative but to deal with these prior arguments in the Logic. In a nutshell, his argument there is that since full "reality" is achieved only by the finite's going beyond itself by seeking rational authority for its actions or beliefs, full reality involves something like thought, and thus full reality is not "diverse" from subjectivity (see 3.14–3.16, 3.19, and 5.3–5.4).

Under the heading of "Thought," Hegel explains briefly how thought's still "given" content (§466) is processed by the conceptual Understanding, which seeks "the truth of [the content's] being," and by Judgment which relates it to a "universal," and how Syllogism then "supersedes this difference of form" by "determining content from itself," rather than taking it as given (§467). The simplest way to understand how Intelligence, as "thought," could determine its own content is (again) to remember how, in true infinity, the activity of rational inquiry itself created "reality" (3.19), which therefore must derive whatever content it has from that activity, rather than from anything outside it.

The upshot is that "Intelligence, knowing itself as what determines the content, which is just as much *its own* as it is determined as *being* (*seiend*), is *will*" (§468; emphasis added). Hegel analyzes the will under the heading of "Practical Spirit." He introduces his treatment with the statement that "*True* freedom, as *ethical life* (*Sittlichkeit*), is that the will has as its goals not a subjective, that is, selfish content, but a universal one" (§469R, emphasis added) – a claim that depends for its plausibility upon his refutation of egoism in the *Science of Logic's* Doctrine of the Concept (see 5.17) and in "Self-consciousness" (see 6.5.1). The essential steps in his account of the will, which are presented in EG §§476–480, are repeated with greater detail and precision in §§5–21 of the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, which I analyzed in 5.7, and I will not repeat the analysis here. "The actually free will," Hegel concludes here, "is the unity of the theoretical and the practical Spirit; *free will* that is *for itself as free will*" (EG §481), in that it knows itself as a reality whose object, content and end is itself, its own freedom (EG §480, 481, 482; PR §21), rather than the satisfaction of particular inclinations or passions that are generated in it by something other than itself.

However, the Spirit that is this free will is as yet "only *in itself* the Idea, only the *Concept* of absolute Spirit": It is "a finite will, but it is the

activity of developing [the Idea] and positing its developed content as a determinate being [or] *actuality*" (EG §482). This activity and this determinate being will be "objective Spirit" (and, indeed, "absolute Spirit," as "religious and scientific actuality" [§482R, 10:302/240], as well).

6.7. Objective Spirit: Introduction

Objective Spirit is the absolute Idea, but still only in itself, and therefore dealing with the finite, external material of particular needs, natural things, and the relations between singular wills (EG §483). Its goal is to deal with them in such a way that freedom can "realize" itself – and thus be "with itself," at home – in this external, objective world (§484). It does this by instituting universality, or "Right" (*das Recht*), which is "to be understood comprehensively as the determinate being of *all* determinations of freedom" (EG §486; cp. PR §29).

The treatment of Objective Spirit in the *Encyclopedia's Philosophy of Spirit*, which we will follow here, is much expanded in Hegel's separate treatise on ethics and politics, the *Philosophy of Right* (1821). I will occasionally give references to important parallel passages there. For the purpose of following Hegel's overall argument in this area, the *Philosophy of Spirit's* treatment has the great advantage of surveyability; and allowing for its inevitable concision, it is remarkably precise and illuminating on the issues that it treats.¹¹

"Right" will first be formal and abstract, having its determinate being as the person and her property (*Eigentum*); then it will be "reflected into itself," having its determinate being "within itself" as "the *subjective* will – Morality"; and finally it will be "substantial," the actuality that is in keeping with its Concept, as "ethical life, in family, civil society, and the State" (§487; cp. PR §33).

6.8. Objective Spirit: Abstract "Right," Property and Wrong

Right first takes the form of possessions or (when those possessions embody my personal *volition*) of property. "Person"-hood is the "self-knowledge" of the absolutely free will (§488; compare 5.17 on "person" in the Idea); property is the "determinate being" of this personhood (§489). The thing (*Sache*) that constitutes the property is the "mean"

11 The one section of the *Philosophy of Right* that I analyze in some detail in this book – in 5.7 – is §§5–21 of the Introduction.

through which the “extremes” that are different persons are connected (§491). Hegel makes it clear in the *Philosophy of Right* that the things that can embody my personal volition and thus be my property include my body (PR §47, 48). I make a “concrete return” from the external thing “into myself,” insofar as “other people exist, I have a relation to them, and they recognize and are recognized, reciprocally [*dem Anerkanntsein von ihnen, das gegenseitig ist*]” (EG §490). Here, Hegel is relying, of course, on his account of “recognition” (in “Self-consciousness” [see 6.5.1]), and through it on the Idea (5.14–5.17), which achieved a “concreteness” that “abstract freedom” and spurious infinity fail to achieve. Since, as I explained in 6.5.1, the “recognition” argument does not require that anyone *in fact* be recognized as free by someone else, in order to be free (but only that each of us recognize others as capable of freedom, so that they can be capable of recognizing our freedom), there is no need to assume that Hegel intends, in §490, to say that my claim to ownership of a certain thing depends upon the contingent fact that other people exist who are in fact willing to endorse that claim. Instead, he presumably intends to make a point paralleling the one that he made in §§429–436: that I can’t make a plausible claim to ownership unless I am willing to grant that others can make similar claims, and that no one of us possesses the final authority over the validity of such claims.

Property can pass between two persons by “contract” (*Vertrag*), which however also reflects the “arbitrariness” of particular wills, and thus brings with it the possibility of “wrong” (*Unrecht*), that is to say, of actions that do not correspond to “the right that is in and for itself” (§495), which is the determinate being that would reflect freedom as such, rather than “arbitrariness.” (On this distinction, see 5.7.) This “wrong” can be either unintentional (*unbefangen*), or “deception” (evil which pretends to acknowledge right), or “violently evil,” which is to say, criminal (§§497–499). Wrong can be punished, but until there is some distinction between right and the subjective will, such punishment will be mere “revenge” (§500). So the subjective will that “either gives determinate being to *right in itself*, or departs from that right and opposes itself to it,” is the topic of the next domain of “right”: “Morality” (*Moralität*) (§502; emphasis added).

6.9. Objective Spirit: “Morality,” Conscience and Evil

Hegel explains that “Morality,” as the name of the domain that he will now explore, should be understood in a broad sense in which it refers

not only to what is morally *good*, but to the general issue of an “inner” determination of the will, which may be for good or for evil (§503R). The will that expresses itself in either of these ways – either giving being to right in itself, or opposing it – is expressed in “action” (*Handlung*). “Action” goes beyond the mere “deed” (*Tat*) of the subject insofar as action is something that the subject can properly be held *responsible* for (EG §504), since she *intended* its essential determination (this is the “right of intention”) and its content was her goal, as being in some sense her “welfare” (*Wohl*) (this is the “right of welfare”) (§505).

However, what is supposedly intended and what is actually done can come into contradiction; and the “welfare” in question is either “abstract,” or merely particular because it “pertains only to *this* subject” (§506). The concrete truth of these abstractions is “the content of the *universal will that is in and for itself*,” and is “*in and for itself good*,” and is thus “*duty*” for the subject (§507). “In and for itself,” as we know from Chapters 4 and 5, is Hegel’s description of essence or the Concept as summing up the starting point (the “in itself”) and the self-supersession and conclusion (the “for itself”) of Being. So the being of the universal will that is in and for itself embodies the lasting accomplishments of Being.

However, insofar as the particularity that this universal includes “is still abstract, no *principle of determination* is present” (§508, emphasis added; see 5.5 on “principle of its differences”). Determination occurs outside the universal, as well as inside it, and gives rise to “the deepest contradiction” (*ibid.*). This contradiction takes four forms: (a) There are various goods and duties, which conflict with one another. The subject *ought* to resolve these conflicts. (b) The subject *ought* to achieve the determinate being of her own freedom. She also *ought* to pursue the universal good. (This is precisely the duality of “autonomy” – which has the result that autonomy as such needn’t necessarily be guided by the *moral* Categorical Imperative – with which I charged Kant in 2.7.) Whether these two oughts harmonize or not is contingent, but they *ought* to be harmonized. (c) As abstract self-certainty, abstract reflection of freedom into itself, the subject is different from reason and is able to treat the universal as itself something particular and contingent, and thus to be evil (§509). (Compare PR§140[f] on “irony” and evil.) (d) As a result of the difference, in “morality,” between the subjective will and external “matter” (*Sache*), it is contingent whether the good is realized in the world and whether the subject finds her welfare there; but both of these *ought* to occur.

In all of these ways, Hegel says, Morality is contradictory. What is meant by “contradictory,” here? We know from the “Quality” chapter of the WL that Hegel regards the “ought” as a necessary step toward full “reality,” but one that initially leads to the spurious infinity in which the finite and the ought are opposed to and rendered finite by each other, so that reality is not accomplished, because the transcendence of finitude that it requires is not accomplished (see 3.9.). So the “ought” fails, initially, to achieve what it is meant to achieve. (It *succeeds* in achieving the reality that it’s meant to achieve, when it is superseded by and included within true infinity.) It’s evident from the summary that I just gave of Hegel’s account of the contradictoriness of “morality” that that contradictoriness is closely associated, for him, with the “ought.” Is the “ought” of Morality also intended to achieve a kind of reality? Sure enough, the goal of the free will, in Objective Spirit, was to “realize” its concept in the external, objective world of particular needs, natural things, and the relations between singular wills (EG §§483–484; see 6.7). The “ought” came into Morality, along with the “good” and “duty,” as a way of overcoming the gap between what is supposedly intended and what is actually done, in the world, and between welfare’s “abstractness” and its mere particularity (§506). In each of these areas, the “good” and the “ought” were clearly meant to make the free will not merely inner, merely abstract, or merely particular, but effectively “real.” But as Hegel explains in §§508–510, they fail to do so, because they create new polar oppositions, which only “ought” to be harmonized, but aren’t yet harmonized in reality. As in “Quality,” something that was meant to achieve reality, by surpassing finitude, initially only creates new finitudes. Just as in Hegel’s original account of “contradiction,” in the Doctrine of Essence (see 4.12), here too “contradiction” results from the unstable coexistence of concepts stemming from negativity (in this case, the concept of the free will and its reality), and concepts stemming from negation and diversity (in this case, the concepts of particular needs, natural things, and the relations between singular wills). This instability will be, as always, the motor of the dialectical development.¹²

Hegel dramatically describes the situation that has been arrived at as the confrontation of Conscience and Evil, in which the former is “the

12 In his more detailed treatment of Morality in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel diagnoses various moral philosophies as exhibiting the “contradictoriness” that he has described, here, in general terms. These philosophies include Kant’s ethics (PR §135R; see 5.6), Jesuit “probabilism,” and Friedrich von Schlegel’s “irony” (PR §140). For my assessment of Hegel’s accusation that Kant’s ethical principle is effectively “empty,” see 5.6.

will of the *good*, but which in this pure subjectivity is the non-Objective, non-universal, and unsayable,” and the latter, rather than remaining in the abstractness of “decision,” “gives itself the content, against the good, of a subjective interest” (§511). But the “result, the truth” of this confrontation is that both the evil will, which is “for itself against the good,” and the good which is only abstract and an “ought,” are “null” (*nichtig*) – and that the Concept (in contrast to the point of view of mere “relation” [see 4.13, final paragraph] which Morality represents) shows how to conceive of subjectivity in its “*identity* with” the good, as its translation into deed (its *Betätigung*) and its development (§512; cf. PR §141). The evil will and the abstract good are both “null,” I suggest, because they both fail to achieve the “reality” (of the free will in the external) that Objective Spirit aims to achieve. The evil will fails to achieve this reality because it fails to be fully free (because it commits itself to a particular subjective “interest” [compare PR §15]). (It is reasonable to add – though Hegel doesn’t say this here – that the evil will also fails to recognize the freedom of other wills as “not differentiated” from its own, as the mutual recognition argument shows that a free will must.) And the abstract good fails to achieve this reality because it fails to achieve concrete form in the external world. In “Ethical Life” (*Sittlichkeit*), Hegel will show how the free will can achieve concrete form in the external world without ceasing to be free – how subjectivity can have “*identity* with” the good.

6.10. Objective Spirit: “Ethical Life” (*Sittlichkeit*)

6.10.1 *Introduction to Ethical Life.* Hegel writes that “ethical life” is the completion of Objective Spirit, and thus the “truth” of both Subjective and Objective Spirit. Objective Spirit’s freedom was divided between the “thing” (*Sache*) (in Abstract Right) and the abstractly universal good (in Morality); the former, in its inner singularity, was abstractly opposed to the universal. Both of these one-sidednesses are overcome when “self-conscious *freedom* becomes *Nature*” (EG §513) (in PR §151A, Hegel calls it “a second, spiritual nature”), by becoming both something that individuals are conscious of, and *custom* (*Sitte*) (EG §513), or the “Spirit of a people” (§514). Viewing their customary duty as both “*theirs* and *something existing* (*Seiendes*)” (*ibid.*), persons who participate in ethical life aren’t divided in the ways that I mentioned. Customs are “something existing (*Seiendes*)” in that they are habitual and shared throughout the people, but they are liberating in the same way that habit is

liberating: The self “exists *in* these forms as its possession” (EG §410, 10:184/140; see 6.4 on “habit”).

Hegel will make it clear later, under the heading of “World History,” that the “customs” of “ethical life” are revised over time, as people become clearer about what freedom requires. Accordingly, the “customs” that Hegel lays out in the detailed account of “ethical life” that he now proceeds to give are meant to represent not his own society or any other existing society, but rather the customs that will fully articulate freedom. So the sequence in which he develops these customs does not represent any sort of historical sequence, but rather a logical one, moving (as, for example, the Idea moved) from a more “immediate or natural” stage through a “relative” stage to a final, self-conscious stage. “Immediate or natural” ethical life is the *family*; the “relative totality” of relations between independent individuals is *civil society*; and “self-conscious” ethical life as an “organic actuality” is the *state constitution* (§517).

6.10.2 The Family. The family “contains the *natural* moment [of] the relation between the sexes, but elevated into a spiritual determination; – the unitedness that goes with love and with an attitude of trust” (§518). The difference between the natural sexes, Hegel says, “appears also equally as a difference of intellectual and ethical vocation,” a difference that he explains in some detail in PR §§165–166. The resulting “marriage” must be monogamous (see PR §167). The family is “one person” (§520). It educates its children to the point where they can be “self-standing persons” (§521) and establish their own families (§522). This multiplication of families, as well as the fact that the family as such depends upon “feeling” and thus is subject to contingency and transiency, so that its members (when it disintegrates) can encounter one another as self-standing persons in legally defined relationships, generates a new sphere of ethical life, “civil society” (*die bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) (§520).

6.10.3 Civil Society. Civil society is initially non-“ethical,” insofar as in it, individuals simply pursue their individual interests. This is the situation of “atomism” (§523). Given that most resources are owned (not available for simple appropriation), this produces a need for individual work, to meet one’s needs (§524). Those needs become differentiated, and a “division of labor” results, together with individual education and culture (*Bildung*) (§525), both as consumer and as producer. These make work more uniform and easier, and they also make the individual

correspondingly dependent upon society as a whole for the satisfaction of needs that can't be satisfied by her own specialized type of labor (§526). The concrete division of the society's resources according to the moments of the Concept (§527) yields a division of the population into three "estates" (*Stände*): the "substantial or natural estate" (Hegel has in mind agricultural landowners); the "second, reflected estate" (what we might call the middle classes or the bourgeoisie); and the "third, thinking estate," which is responsible for the society's universal interests (§528).

If it is to be a secure system of freedom, the "system of needs" that we have just described needs to be governed by law (§529). The first requirement of law is that it should be "*known and posited as what is valid*" (ibid.). Hegel mentions Sir Robert Peel's efforts toward legal codification in England, but he probably has in mind, even more, the famous *Code Napoléon*, with its effect of liberating ordinary citizens from legal obscurities that were known and accessible only to experts. Law must be "made known" (§530). It is made "necessary" (and thus "objective") by the administration of justice (§531). Courts make right non-contingent, in particular turning revenge into punishment (§531).

So far, civil society is nevertheless dependent on the "particular subjectivity of the judge," and on the "blind necessity of the system of needs": There is no guarantee that what is produced by either of these will coincide with "right in itself" or with "the consciousness of the universal" (§532). Two steps in the direction of such a guarantee are the "police" (by which Hegel means public authorities who attend to issues of public welfare) and the "corporation" (by which he means welfare-promoting membership organizations such as municipalities and churches [see PR §§288 and 270R]). In the "corporation," Hegel emphasizes, "the particular citizen finds security for his property as a private person, *but also steps out of his singular private interest and has a conscious activity aimed at a relatively universal end*" (§534; emphasis added). This is one of the places where Hegel addresses the challenge that was later aimed at him by Karl Marx, who maintained in his early manuscript, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, that Hegel had not shown, and could not show, any connection between the consciousness of the bourgeois, as a private person, and the consciousness of a citizen, concerned with the public interest.¹³ The same general issue

13 "In virtue of its character, civil society, or the private estate, does not have the universal as the end of its essential activity. . . . In order to achieve political significance and efficacy

was stressed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his *Emile* and elsewhere, and by Benjamin Constant, with his contrast between the public-spirited “liberty of the ancients” and the self-interested “liberty of the moderns.”¹⁴ Hegel’s solution to this problem – which is a major problem for any theory, like his, that takes seriously the role of apparently purely self-interested behavior in the economic realm – is to reinterpret the pursuit of economic self-interest as such as being, from the beginning, only partially free, so that it is not surprising when the “private person,” by participating in welfare-promoting mutual aid institutions such as municipalities and churches, discovers a greater freedom there and “steps out of his singular private interest and has a conscious activity aimed at a relatively universal end.” The private citizen in the first place cannot be *purely* egoistic, since he has already absorbed the conclusions of Hegel’s arguments against rational egoism in the WL’s Doctrine of the Concept and in EG’s account of mutual recognition. The broader perspective that the private person takes on through participation in the “corporation,” was also anticipated in part by the education and culture (*Bildung*) (EG §525) that he received by participating in market society. This education and culture already created a distance between the individual’s immediate urges, on the one hand, and his educated or cultivated “needs,” on the other; the perspective of the “corporation” adds to that distance. This is how Hegel connects the apparent “atomism” of market society as described by writers such as Adam Smith to the public spirit that must exist, in some way, if there is to be a “thinking estate” and a “state” that concern themselves with the freedom of the community as a whole.¹⁵

it must rather renounce itself as what it already is, as private estate. . . . This political act is a complete transubstantiation. . . . The individual must thus undertake a complete schism within himself. . . . The existence of the state as executive is complete without him, and his existence in civil society is complete without the state” (Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right,’* ed. Joseph O’Malley [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970], pp. 76–78; translation revised). Marx develops essentially this one point for about ten pages (pp. 70–80). I have found no discussion of Marx’s point in the published commentaries on his *Critique*.

¹⁴ See Rousseau, *Emile*, translated by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 40, and Benjamin Constant, *The Spirit of Conquest and Usurpation* (1814), Part II, secs. 6–9, and “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared to that of the Moderns” (1819), both in his *Political Writings*, ed. Biancamaria Fontana (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

¹⁵ I give a detailed interpretation of Hegel’s argument from “civil society” to the “state” in “How Hegel Reconciles Private Freedom with Citizenship,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 7 (1999): 419–433.

6.10.4 *The State*. As “the *self-conscious* ethical substance,” the state unites the principle of civil society with that of the family (EG §535). The principle of the family is the *unity* that in the family takes the form of the feeling of love; but in the state, in order to be consistent with civil society’s “knowing and self-active will,” this unity receives the form of “*known* universality” which has “knowing subjectivity” as its goal (ibid.). This “knowing subjectivity” I take to be the same “freedom” that ethical life was initially described as turning into a (second) nature (EG §513; cf. PR §142). The role of the state is to promote this freedom consciously and intentionally in the civil society and the families that make it up, but which in themselves don’t combine unity and a knowing and self-active will, and thus can’t themselves promote it systematically.

Hegel analyzes the state first from the point of view of its inner public law or constitution, then from the point of view of its external relations (relations with other states), and finally as a “moment” in the development of Spirit’s universal Idea in its actuality, which is world history (§536). The state’s job is to protect its citizens and promote their welfare, by protecting the family and guiding civil society, but also to “bring all of this back to the life of the universal substance,” which sets limits to these subordinate spheres, within it (§537). The laws by which it does this represent limitations (*Schranken*) for the individual, but they are also the goal and “work” of the whole, produced by the functioning of the estates and individuals, and freely willed by them (§538). The constitution is this articulation of state power, determining how the rational will will be found and how it will be put into practice (§539). Constitutions are made by “indwelling spirit and history” – by the “spirit of a people” (§540) – rather than by the decision or action of individuals, as such.

The “government” (*Regierung*) is the “universal” part of the constitution (the family and civil society being the others) (§541). Within the government, various “powers” are distinguished. Hegel grants the appropriateness of Montesquieu’s notion of the “division of powers,” but insists that these powers must not be opposed to one another as though they could exist independently of each other. Instead, they must be combined in the manner of the Concept (§541R). Hegel asserts that when this is done, it is seen that the first power is the “princely” one, so that “the monarchical constitution is . . . the constitution of *developed* reason” (§542). This is because the “abstract, final decision” needs to be embodied in a single person, because (1) this gives the decision “the external bond and sanction under which everything is done in the government”

(we might say, it expresses the government's "sovereignty"), and (2) the single person contributes "the determination of immediacy and thus of nature," which is best expressed in a hereditary succession (§542R).¹⁶

The second "power" is that of particular governmental departments: lawgiving, administration of justice, "police," and so on, for which particularly trained and skilled people are required (§543). The third is the estates general (*ständische Behörde*), through which individual citizens can feel that their voices play a role in legislation, in matters not affecting (as war and peace do) the state's functioning as an individual, which pertains to the princely power (§544). Hegel emphasizes that the people can contribute to the process of legislation only through their organized "estates," and not directly, because the latter would have the effect of opposing one power to another, and thus destroying the logical coherence of the state as such (§544R).

6.10.5 International Law, and World History. Since each state pertains to a singular, naturally determined people, it excludes other states, and although between such states there *ought* to be right or law, in actuality there is none, so that conflicts between them lead to war (§545). War underlines the relative nothingness of individuals and their property, which may be sacrificed in order to preserve the universal substance (§546). "So-called international law," Hegel says, has to be recognized by the states in question (§547).

Though states are not inherently subordinate to international law, they are subordinate to "universal world-history . . . whose events exhibit the dialectic of the various national Spirits – the judgment of the world [or 'the last judgment': *das Weltgericht*]" (§548). This dialectic of national Spirits, which Hegel also refers to as "the plan of Providence" (*Plan der Vorsehung*) (EG §549R, TWA 10:348/277), is simply the history of freedom. "Philosophy" has shown that freedom is what history is about (§549R, 10:352/281), insofar as philosophy has shown that freedom is the source of reality (see 3.8), so that the story of what is real must be the story of freedom. Hegel's accounts of Nature and Spirit, including his analysis of ethical life as the state and world history, have demonstrated this conclusion in more detail: that what gives each phase its reality is the freedom that it promotes, achieves, or embodies.

¹⁶ The most plausible defense that I have seen of a view of monarchy that resembles Hegel's is given by Stephen C. Bosworth, *Hegel's Political Philosophy: The Test Case of Constitutional Monarchy* (New York: Garland, 1991).

6.11. Absolute Spirit: Introduction

The thinking Spirit of world history, by stripping off . . . those limitations of the Spirits of particular peoples and its own involvement in the world [its *Weltlichkeit*], lays hold of its concrete universality, and elevates itself to *knowledge of Absolute Spirit* [*zum Wissen des absoluten Geistes*] as the eternally actual truth, in which knowing reason is free for itself, while necessity, nature, and history are only ministrant to its revelation and the vessels of its honor.

(EG §552)

It's important to notice the grammatical ambiguity of the German formula, "*zum Wissen des absoluten Geistes*," as well as of related formulations such as "elevation of the Spirit to God" (§552R, 10:354/282; cf. EL §50R, 8:131–132/95–96, and VPRel 1:308/1:414). "*Zum Wissen des absoluten Geistes*" could just as well be translated, "to knowledge that *is* (or belongs to) Absolute Spirit"; and it is just as reasonable to interpret "elevation of the Spirit to God" as the elevation by which the Spirit *becomes* God, as it is to interpret it as the elevation by which the Spirit reaches God. In keeping with his critique of spurious infinity, Hegel is quite intentionally not speaking of God as something that is independently "there," waiting for finite humans to know him or to elevate their "Spirit" to him. At the same time, in keeping with his critique of *finitude*, Hegel is very clear that the finite humans aren't "there," or real, *either*, independently of their elevation to the infinite. This is the moral of his entire treatment of "Spirit": that when you see what gives the phenomena of Spirit (such as Consciousness, Morality, Civil Society, the Spirit of a People, and so on) their full reality, you will see that it is infinite freedom, as Absolute Spirit, that does this. As the (less real) finite humans going beyond themselves, this infinite freedom is what was *true* in the traditional conception of a transcendent God. (In 3.17, I gave a more detailed explanation of how true infinity serves to combine what is true in traditional theism with what is true in naturalistic critiques of traditional theism.)

There is also a second ambiguity in the "*Wissen des absoluten Geistes*": an ambiguity between Spirit's (God's or humans') "knowledge" as knowledge of something *other than* itself, and its knowledge of *itself*. The first interpretation – knowledge of something other than itself – is a natural one. Spirit does know the world as something other than itself, insofar as Spirit is Consciousness, Intuition, Representation, and the like. But in knowing the world as other than itself, Spirit comes to realize that

what is most real in this world is what is infinite, and thus is *itself*, and at that point, the “knowledge of *Absolute Spirit*” emerges, as Absolute Spirit’s *self*knowledge. So the knowledge that is or belongs to Absolute Spirit turns out to be self-knowledge – in keeping with Hegel’s initial statement about Spirit, that Spirit is “the Idea that has arrived at its being-for-self” (EG §381; see EN§376, and 6.3). *Absolute Spirit* is the Spirit that fully satisfies this description.

Subjective and Objective Spirit should be seen, Hegel says, as unfolding the “reality” or the “existence” of Absolute Spirit (EG §553), so that it can know itself (compare §554, first sentence), which, as I have just suggested, it must do in order to be itself.

Religion, as this supreme sphere may be in general designated, must be regarded as issuing from the subject and having its home in the subject, just as much as it is regarded as objectively issuing from Absolute Spirit, which *is* as Spirit in its community [or “in its congregation”: *der als Geist in seiner Gemeinde ist*].

(EG §554/292)

The difference, Hegel implies, between “issuing from the subject” and “issuing from Absolute Spirit” is just a verbal one. Absolute Spirit’s existence is in its community. As Hegel had concluded much earlier (in “Quality,” in the WL), the true infinite “*is* only as a transcending of” the finite (WL 5:160/GW 21:133,36–37/145–146); and the “community” is presumably finite. (Of course, we must also remember the complementary principle that human communities, for their part, reach their full reality only by going beyond themselves as, or in, world history and Absolute Spirit, since “finitude *is* only as a transcending of itself” [WL 5:160/GW 21:133,34/145].)

Why does Hegel say that the “supreme sphere” that is Absolute Spirit may be designated as “*religion*,” even though we know that the final form that Absolute Spirit will take is not religion, as such, but philosophy? Evidently Hegel is using “religion” in a double sense.¹⁷ In the narrower, more conventional sense, “religion” designates the sort of material that he will analyze, especially, as the second phase of Absolute Spirit (“Revealed Religion”). In the broader sense, it refers to

¹⁷ Walter Jaeschke provides detailed and very helpful analyses of this passage and of Absolute Spirit as a whole (with the exception of “Art”), together with Hegel’s relevant lectures and earlier publications, in Hermann Drüe, et al., *Hegels ‘Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften’* (1830). *Ein Kommentar zum Systemgrundriß* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), pp. 375–501.

the sort of structure that he has just outlined, in which a community or congregation is identical with the Spirit that “is . . . in its community” – the structure that I identified, initially, in true infinity. In his Jena works and in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, when he emphasizes philosophy’s systematic preoccupation with God (as we are seeing, his system in fact culminates in God as Absolute Spirit), Hegel often refers to philosophy as “worship of God” or “service of God” (*Gottesdienst*) (TWA 2:113/Diff 172; VPRel 1:4/1:84). In that broad sense, it makes sense to refer to philosophy, likewise, as “*religion*”; and it’s not difficult to imagine how art, as well, could be included under that kind of a heading. The point being that all three – art, religion in the narrower sense, and philosophy – direct attention toward and constitute a self-knowing reality that can be said to subsume the less self-knowing and less self-determining (and thus, less “real”) realities of subjective and objective Spirit.

As though to emphasize that the “religion” in the broad sense under which he is subsuming philosophy is not to be regarded as something that is based on groundless faith, Hegel reasserts here (EG §554R) what he argued in EL §63R (see 3.20): that when it is properly understood, “faith” is not opposed to knowledge; rather, it is the specific kind of knowledge that goes beyond the finite and the domain of the “understanding.”

Hegel says more about the issue of the relation between “religion” and forms of human functioning that aren’t in the usual sense “religious” in his Remark to EG §552, the final paragraph prior to his formal account of Absolute Spirit. Here he takes up the issue of “the relation between *the state* and religion. . . . It is evident from what has preceded,” Hegel says, “that *religion is the substance [Substantialität] of the ethical disposition itself and of the state*” (EG §552R, 10:355/283; emphasis added). Hegel’s argument for this claim shows that he is using “religion,” here, in his special, “broad” sense, rather than in the conventional narrower sense. His argument is that because “religion is the consciousness of *absolute truth*” (ibid.), what is to count as ethical must participate in it. From which he immediately concludes that this “religion *must have the true content*; that is, the Idea of *God* that is known in it must be the true one” (ibid.; emphasis added). And he proceeds to explain how even within the Christian religion, the “idea of God that is known” is not always the true one. In Catholicism, “God is presented in the Host as an *external thing*, for religious adoration,” and prayer and justification,

likewise, are externalized; all of which “binds the Spirit under an externalism by which Spirit’s Concept is perverted and misconceived at its source, and law and justice, morality and conscience, responsibility and duty are corrupted at their root” (§552R, 10:357/285). Such a religion cannot support a truly ethical disposition or state, and political programs that assume that it can – that “a Revolution without a Reformation” can be accomplished – are “a modern folly,” or at most a “temporary expedient, when one lacks the power to descend into the depths of the religious Spirit and raise it to its truth” (§552R, 10:360–361/287–288). Evidently, then, the “religion” that is “the substance of the ethical disposition itself and of the state” must be the properly reformed religion that Hegel takes himself to be expounding in his philosophical system.

Hegel goes on, in this Remark, to criticize Plato for supposing that an ideal political community could be based on philosophy alone, and not on the “religion” that Hegel is advocating. Here he associates this “religion” with the Aristotelian conception of God or of “the entelechy of thought [as] the *noēsis tēs noēseōs* [thinking on thinking]” (EG §552R, 10:362/289), in which, according to Hegel, we see “subjectivity” going beyond the “substantiality” of the Platonic Forms. This subjectivity, he says, involves “feeling, intuition, [and] representation”; and Greek (that is, Platonic) philosophy, being confronted with a religion that embodied less conceptual truth than the Christian religion embodied, had to simply *oppose* “feeling, intuition, representation,” and polytheism’s poetic imagination (§552R, 10:363/289), and thus wasn’t able to see the identity of substance and subject – the process of the finite’s going beyond itself – that *connects* feeling, imagination, and so on, with conceptual thought, in Absolute Spirit. In other words, Plato wasn’t able to conceive of the unity of art, religion in the narrow sense, and philosophy, in something like Absolute Spirit, because he lacked the conception of “negativity” or the finite’s going beyond itself, which Hegel refers to in this passage as “subjectivity,” and which enables him to interpret these three domains – together with all the domains that precede them – as systematically interrelated and mutually supportive.

It is clear that the intimate relation that Hegel finds, here, between the state and “religion,” does not coincide with the Romantic notion of the “unity of state and *church*,” which Hegel discusses in the *Philosophy of Right* (PR §270R, 7:428/301; emphasis altered), and which he rejects because he regards it as the formula for “oriental despotism” (in which

“there is no state,” in the proper sense of the word).¹⁸ The “religion” – and the “community” or “congregation” (*Gemeinde*) – that Hegel is discussing in EG §552R and §554 are not identifiable as the property of any particular ecclesiastical organization (even though Hegel does believe that Lutheran Christianity exhibits them better than any other church does). Hegel agrees with Romanticism in criticizing the Enlightenment’s rejection of God and religion, but unlike Romanticism, he is not satisfied to *reject* that rejection, and instead considers it vital to deal with the Enlightenment’s justified critique of the traditional *conceptualizations* of God and religion, and of religious authority and its relation to politics.

In his final introductory paragraph on Absolute Spirit, Hegel describes this Spirit’s “subjective Consciousness” as the “process” by which “faith in the testimony of the Spirit” is the “certainty of objective truth” (EG §555). It is a “process,” because although this faith and this certainty are immediately one, there is nevertheless a process of “superceding opposition,” “authenticating” that initial certainty, and thus “attaining reconciliation, the actuality of Spirit,” and these are achieved through “devotion, the implicit or explicit cult” (*ibid.*), which is the practice of what Hegel is calling “religion,” in his broad sense of the word. I gave an anticipatory sketch of this process in 3.19–3.20. Hegel’s final account of it will make up the remainder of his discussion of Absolute Spirit.

6.12. Absolute Spirit: Art

The “immediate” form of the religious “knowledge” that Hegel identified in EG §552 – 554, he locates in art. Art, on the one hand, is composed of an art work and a subject who produces and reveres it; but it is also “the concrete intuition and representation of Spirit that is absolute in itself, as the Ideal” (EG §556). Here, the work’s “natural immediacy . . . is so transfigured by the informing Spirit that the figure exhibits nothing other than this” Spirit, Ideal, or Idea; this is “the figure of *beauty*” (*ibid.*). In this case, “the God is determined both in a spiritual way and simultaneously as a natural element or determinate being”; but

18 Friedrich Schlegel promoted the idea of a “Christian state . . . founded on the institution of the Church,” in his *Signatur des Zeitalters* (1820–1823) (*Friedrich Schlegel Kritische Ausgabe* 7:561, cited by Allen Wood in the H. B. Nisbet translation of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], p. 460, n. 12). It was a common motif of Restoration, anti-Revolutionary political thought.

this ‘both X and Y’ is not a “*spiritual* unity,” because in a spiritual unity the natural would be superseded (*aufgehoben*) (§557), within the spiritual. Accordingly, the community that worships in this way has only “custom” (*Sitte*), without the “subjective inwardness of *conscience*” (ibid.). Consequently, the Spirit of beautiful art – by which Hegel means, primarily, ancient Greek art – is not yet Absolute Spirit as such, but rather “breaks up into an indeterminate polytheism” (§559).

Hegel identifies three great categories or epochs of art: “symbolic” (or “sublime”) art, “classical” or “beautiful” art, and “romantic” art.¹⁹ The first category covers all art (including poetry, music, and architecture) prior to classical Greece, including all the cultures of Asia; the second refers primarily to the art of classical Greece; and the third refers to the art that arises in connection with, or after the rise of, Christianity. Despite his evident strong attachment to Greek art (to which the other two categories relate as “before” and “after”), Hegel does not view the Greeks as the last word, because he doesn’t view art itself as the last word: “The ancient statue of the gods lacks the light of the eyes; the god does not know himself,” he said in a lecture.²⁰ “Beautiful art, like the religion that is peculiar to it, has its future in *true religion*” (EG §563; emphasis added), that is, in Christianity, in which Hegel thinks the Greek gods’ lack of self-knowledge, and of “the subjective inwardness of *conscience*,” is remedied.

6.13. Absolute Spirit: Revealed Religion

A “revealed” God will remedy the lack of “subjective inwardness” and self-knowledge in the sensual objects or sensual gods that were created and honored by ancient Greek “beautiful art,” because a revealed God is all about self-knowledge. “God is God only so far as he knows himself; his self-knowledge is, further, his self-consciousness in man and man’s knowledge of God, which proceeds to man’s self-knowledge in God” (EG §564, 10:374/298). The first proposition, that God is God only so far as he knows himself, follows from the account of God or Absolute Spirit as self-knowledge that was given in EG §§552–554. The second

19 For a survey of Hegel’s work on the philosophy of art, drawing on unpublished lecture transcripts, see Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert’s contribution to Hermann Drüe, et al., *Hegels Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (1830). *Ein Kommentar zum Systemgrundsatz* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), pp. 317–374.

20 Hegel, *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Manuskripte und Nachschriften* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1983 ff.), vol. 2, p. 180.

proposition, about *man's* role in all of this, follows directly from the conception of God as true infinity (on which, see 3.17). Putting them together, we can conclude that God must be fully "revealed" or "manifested" (EG §564), in and to man.²¹ Hegel reminds us that despite the skepticism about knowledge of God that had become widespread in religious circles in his time, Christianity is traditionally described as "*revealed* religion."

Whereas the Greek art-religion had operated on the level of the senses, Christian religion operates, initially, on the level of representation (*Vorstellung*), which lays out its contents as self-standing "moments," appearances in temporal sequence, and events conceived of through finite "reflection-determinations" (EG §565) – that is, as the Biblical stories of the Creation, Jesus, and so on. Hegel describes these self-standing moments or elements as (a) an eternal and abiding content, (b) a difference between the eternal essence and its manifestation, and (c) an infinite return and reconciliation of the one with the other (§566). The first moment, "universality," is the "creator of heaven and earth," but "in this *eternal* sphere, creates only *himself* as his *son*" (§567; emphasis added). In the second moment, of "particularity" or "judgment," the eternal moment of mediation, which is the "son," disintegrates into a self-standing *opposition* of heaven and earth, nature and finite Spirit, and this opposition sets itself up, in the extreme of self-contained (*in sich seienden*) negativity, as Evil (§568). In the third moment, "singularity," however, in which the opposition of universality and particularity goes back into its identical ground (that is, their "contradiction" is "resolved"), three things happen. (1) The universal substance actualizes itself as a singular Self-consciousness, the eternal "son" enters time, so that evil is superseded. By experiencing death, the son demonstrates that he is "*living* and present in the world" (§569). (2) The singular (human) subject sees this process, in (1), as something other than itself, but through the "testimony of the Spirit in it," it first sees itself as null and evil, and then throws off its natural and personal will, unites itself with the son's example in the pain of negativity, and thus knows itself as united with the (original) essence (§570). (3) Through (1) and (2), the original essence becomes both inherent in Self-consciousness, and the actual presence of Spirit as the universal (*ibid.*).

²¹ In Chapter 4, we saw that "manifestation" – which Hegel identifies, in EG §564, with "revelation" – was a distinguishing characteristic of the subjective Concept as it emerged from the dualities of Essence (see 4.17).

Through these three “syllogisms,” and the cycle of concrete representational shapes that they exhibit, Spirit reveals itself. The temporal and spatial dividedness and sequentiality that are embodied in these representations are overcome both in the one-foldness of faith and devotion, and also in *thought*, in which an unfolding can at the same time be “known as an indivisible coherence”; and with this “*thought*,” of course, we arrive at the third form of Absolute Spirit, *philosophy* (EG §571).

It should be clear from Hegel’s continual references, in his analysis of revealed religion, to “representation,” that his use of words like “creation,” “the son,” and so forth is not meant to draw *philosophical* conclusions. Rather, he is using the “representational” language of the *religion* that he takes to represent most fully the philosophical truth – where that philosophical truth, in order to be fully *philosophical*, must be expressed in philosophical (“Conceptual”) rather than representational terminology. Philosophy as such won’t speak of “the son.” Hegel does suggest, however, a parallelism between the Conceptual truth (as presented by his philosophy) and the Christian “representations,” which is so close that despite their difference in “form,” in his opinion his philosophy coheres best with, and could only have emerged from, Christianity.²²

Granting the strong (at least) *parallelism* that Hegel exhibits, between Christian doctrine and his own Conceptual metaphysics, the question for an unorthodox semi-Christian eclectic like myself is, is it true that Hegel’s Conceptual analysis coheres best with and thus could only emerge from the *Christian* “revealed religion,” in particular? In §569, Hegel describes the universal substance as being “actualized out of its abstraction into *singular* Self-consciousness (*zum einzelnen Selbstbewußtsein*).” John Burbidge describes Hegel’s “singular” as a “something that cannot be comprehended, but only indicated”; and Burbidge appears to conclude that Hegel is justified in assuming (as Hegel no doubt *does* assume) that the “singular Self-consciousness” that plays the role that Hegel assigns to it, here, can only be that of a *single* human being, whom a Christian would take to be Jesus.²³

What I wonder, as a self-described “semi-Christian,” is why shouldn’t this “singular” Self-consciousness be any of the numerous other inspired and self-sacrificing teachers and martyrs that the world has seen? And

22 This interpretation of Hegel’s opinion is supported by, for example, his description of Christianity, in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, as “the consummate religion” (*die vollendete Religion*) (VPRel 3:1/LPR 3:61).

23 John W. Burbidge, *Hegel on Logic and Religion. The Reasonableness of Christianity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), p. 132 (quote) and p. 134 (implied conclusion).

then, thinking about Hegel's doctrine that philosophy goes beyond religious "representations," I further wonder: Could Hegel be telling us that the "singularity" or the singleness of Jesus, in the Christian religion, only "*represents*" the singularity of every subject in whom the divine spirit of self-sacrifice is at work (through the "testimony of the Spirit in it" [§570])? In that case, perhaps other religions could "represent" that singularity in other, perhaps equally effective, ways. If Christianity, as such, is only a "representation," then it seems that Hegel's claim that Christianity coheres best with "philosophy," and is the latter's only plausible historical source, could be revised, if the comparative study of religions seemed to warrant revising it, without altering the logic of Hegel's overall account of Absolute Spirit.

To substantiate these suggestions would require a much more detailed investigation than I have room for here. I'll only add that it does seem (*prima facie*) that other religious traditions besides the Christian might reasonably be described as embodying "*revealed* religion," in the sense of a true infinity that is knowable by – manifest to – those who participate in it. Greek polytheism probably would not satisfy this description, for reasons like those that Hegel alludes to in his account of "Art," but I don't see why Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam, in their more sophisticated, less popular/mythological forms, shouldn't qualify. They all seem to say that the world is the manifestation of a deeper reality that is not adequately known simply *as* the world, but is not *radically opposed* to the world either, but rather is to be known through it and in relation to it, and in that sense (it seems reasonable to say) is "manifest" or "revealed" in it.

6.14. Absolute Spirit: Philosophy

When philosophy knows what was "unfolded" in religion not as unfolded but as "an indivisible coherence" (EG §571), it unites art's intuition and religion's representation into "one-fold Spiritual intuition" and also into "Self-conscious thought" (§572). Philosophy differs from religion in its "form," while having the same "content" (§573R, 10:380/303). It recognizes the necessity of the forms of which art and religion avail themselves, while liberating content and form from the "one-sidedness of the forms" and "elevating them into the absolute form" (§573, 10:378/302).

This whole movement is complete when philosophy, looking back on its knowledge, finally grasps its own Concept (§573, 10:379/302).

This Concept, Hegel says, is “the self-thinking Idea, truth that knows itself” (§574). It is “the Logical” (*das Logische*) which has been “tested [or ‘proven’: *bewährt*] in the concrete content [that is, in Nature and Spirit] as its actuality” (ibid.). The Logic’s Absolute Idea was also described, earlier, as “self-thinking” (EL §236); this self-thinking is now also self-“knowing,” and thus it is knowledge or science (*Wissenschaft*). (On this “knowledge” or “science,” compare WL 6:573/GW 12:253,7–15/843–844, and 6.1). However, this knowledge or science “has returned to its beginning, and the Logical, as the *Spiritual*, is science’s *result*, which has shown itself to be the truth that is in and for itself and has elevated itself out of its positing-in-advance judgment or division [*Urteil*] – out of the concrete intuition and the representation of its content – into its pure principle, which is its element” (EPW27, 415). The Logical Idea, having been “tested” in the concrete contents of Nature and Spirit, has thus shown itself to be the truth that epitomizes Being (by being “in and for itself”), and as the Spiritual it has elevated itself from its initial division between artistic intuition and religious representation into its pure principle.

This pure principle Hegel now restates with the aid of a final quotation – which I condense – from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*:

Thought . . . thinks itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same. . . . It is active when it possesses this object. [So this actuality] is the divine element which thought seems to contain.²⁴ [And] the actuality of thought is life, [so we say that] life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God.

(*Metaphysics* xii,7, 1072b18–30; compare 1074a34)

By this quotation, Hegel again suggests that the circular pattern of “self-thinking” is the fundamental truth of philosophy, and that philosophy’s ultimate circle has been completed by the Logical Idea’s emergence in the culmination of Absolute Spirit as “truth that knows itself” (EG §574). Self-knowing truth is not ultimately different from the self-thinking Idea; so Spirit returns to “the Logical.” Hegel and Aristotle also agree that this self-thinking Idea or self-knowing truth is what is

²⁴ Here I follow the Revised Oxford Translation (*The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984], 2:1695), rather than the H. Bonitz translation, which is excerpted in TWA 10:395, note 8. The Oxford translation seems to correspond better to what Hegel finds in the text.

properly referred to as “God.” Hegel *could* point out, though he does not, that something very much like this self-thinking or self-knowing circularity was already the pattern of the negation of the negation (or “negativity”), which, as the core of “the Logical” and thus of the Idea, also pervaded the Idea’s self-“testing” in Nature and Spirit. As Hegel suggested by appealing (in implementing “negativity”) to the “*Ought*,” a self must have something like a thought of itself or a knowledge of itself in order to exist as such. His philosophical system has simply explored the ramifications of that thought, in relation to “otherness” of all kinds. Absolute Spirit as Philosophy embodies the entire articulation, in the Logic and the *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Spirit*, that has gone before it.²⁵

²⁵ I have not considered the much-discussed “three syllogisms” of Logic, Nature, and Spirit in EG §§575–577, which Hegel included in the first and third editions of the *Encyclopedia* but not in the second edition, because I am persuaded by Walter Jaeschke’s analysis (in Hermann Drüe, et al., *Hegels ‘Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften’* (1830). *Ein Kommentar zum Systemgrundriß* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000], pp. 478–486) that they don’t succeed in doing what Hegel hoped that they could do – to unify his entire system into three “syllogisms” – because they fall back on early formulations of Nature versus Spirit that don’t take into account the articulation of Spirit into Subjective, Objective, and Absolute.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I will restate the implications of Hegel's account of freedom – or of true infinity or the Concept or Spirit – for each of the main issues to which he applies it. For a full explanation of each of these implications, the reader should turn back to the relevant parts of the previous chapters, but a summary will be useful.

1. With regard to the duality of desire or inclination versus reason, Hegel argues that finite desire or inclination must go beyond itself, via the “Ought,” in order to achieve “reality” for itself. But this going beyond itself, on the part of finite desire or inclination, constitutes *reason*, properly understood (see 5.7). Rather than being the polar opposite of desire or inclination, then, reason is the self-surpassing of desire or inclination; and thus reason is “with itself” in its “other” (that is, desire or inclination), so that each side, rather than being limited and made finite by the other, is *free*.
2. Hegel treats the duality of human being versus divine being in the same way. God – Absolute Spirit – is not the polar opposite of humans, since that would render God finite, like us. Rather, God is the self-surpassing of humans (and, to varying degrees, of everything else in nature, as well). This does not reduce God to “us,” since it is only by our surpassing ourselves that we become fully real – so we become fully available, as something to which God could be “reduced,” only by going beyond ourselves, and becoming God. Thus, we achieve freedom, as the religious traditions assert, through God, but this does not mean that our freedom is God's rather than ours, for we achieve selfhood itself – and thus the capacity to have “our *own*” freedom – only by going beyond ourselves in God. So we are “with ourselves,” and free, in God.

3. The duality of human subject or knower versus natural object or known is likewise overcome through this freedom or true infinity, since nature achieves full reality only by going beyond itself, in humans or God, so that our knowledge of nature's full reality is our knowledge of ourselves. To the extent that nature achieves reality by going beyond itself, we are "with ourselves," and free, in it.
4. The duality of "me" versus "you" is overcome through the dependence of diverse individuals, me and you, on the one, "identical" true infinity. Since our full reality is achieved only by our going beyond ourselves, the difference between us as mere *finite* beings is not real. Whatever difference *is* real will depend upon our relationship to true infinity; it will be introduced by true infinity, through true infinity's "reflection" as diversity or its "particularization" as objective mechanism or its "freely releasing" itself into the externality of space and time. So our going beyond ourselves through our Genus-relationship (in Life), through Cognition, and through our particularization of Self-consciousness via "mutual recognition," will take us back to that "identity" with each other. Thus, our dependence on true infinity for our ability to be "ourselves" and to "own" our lives requires us to recognize our identity with each other: to be "with ourselves" *in each other*, as well as in God. But this, of course, is still another dimension of freedom: Rather than being rendered finite and unfree by other humans, we can be "with ourselves" in them.
5. Finally, the duality of *good* versus *evil* is also overcome, insofar as evil – as the twin of the "abstract good" (6.9 ; compare 3.24, 5.7) – is seen as a necessary aspect or version of freedom, one, however, that resists the conclusion of (at least) point 4 by insisting on its abstract independence. When evil is seen in this way, it is seen not as sheer perversion, "brute" evil, but as *intelligible* perversion; and thus the concretely good will can be "with itself" – can see *itself*, though horribly distorted – in evil, too. This perhaps highest reconciliation that Hegel offers us may contribute more to our freedom than any of the others.

To be "with oneself" in all of these ways is, in effect, to be "at home" in oneself, one's life, and the world. Hegel makes it clear that we aren't *automatically* "at home" in this way; the reality or "actuality" of freedom requires that we do the necessary work – the thinking and abstracting by which we "go beyond ourselves." Doing that work, however, we find that we aren't inherently estranged from reality and each other. By "going

beyond ourselves,” we are “with ourselves,” in everything. Hegel has shown that the ultimate reality is a freedom that is indistinguishable from love (5.2, 5.17, 6.5.1).

It shouldn't be difficult to see how this theory responds to the common criticisms of individualist “thinking for oneself” that I mentioned in the first paragraphs of the Preface. To the empirical scientists who tell us that what we call “thinking for ourselves” is really just another causally determined process in nature, and to the post-modernists who call one's “self” an illusion, point 1 and point 3 reply that when we aren't satisfied that felt urges or opinions are the final authority on what we should do or believe, it's reasonable to say that we *seek* to go beyond the nature that would simply “tell us” what to do or believe. And since our discussion with the empirical scientists and the post-modernists is precisely such a search (for a *justified*, rather than a merely causally induced, belief), Hegel concludes that by engaging in this discussion, the scientists and post-modernists *in practice concede* that it may be possible to go beyond nature, and to constitute a “self,” in this way. To the religious thinkers who tell us that insistence on one's own freedom and independence may prevent one from experiencing the affiliation with reality as a whole, and the resulting meaning, value, and identity, that can be found through a relationship with God, point 2 replies by showing how a relationship to something that it's reasonable to call “God” – and a relationship that embodies deep meaning, value, and identity – can emerge precisely from insisting on thinking for oneself, and thinking about what that kind of thinking brings about. To the skeptics who tell us that we have no reason to think that thought of this kind can give us access to *reality*, point 3 replies that if we understand reality as something that is what it is by virtue of itself, we have reason to think that this kind of thought precisely *constitutes* reality, and thus must be able to know reality. To the defenders of “traditional values” who tell us that there is nothing to deter a subject or a self that sets its authority above that of tradition from disregarding the rights and interests of others, point 4 replies that when a subject who seeks to think for herself understands what that search brings about, she will see that that search makes her, in an important sense, identical with others. To the critics who complain that the mere existence of an individual, as such, gives no access to any authoritative conception of value, points 1–5 all respond by showing that the functioning of an individual who deserves that name involves precisely the construction of an authoritative conception of value (which will be “reconciled” with

reality as a whole in all of the ways suggested by points 1–5). And to those who complain that modernity makes us “homeless,” points 1–5 show how people who think for themselves can be, and are, at home in themselves, their world, and each other. In all of these ways, Hegel successfully defends individualism’s basic notion, that it is vital to think for oneself, against its apparently disastrous consequences.

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